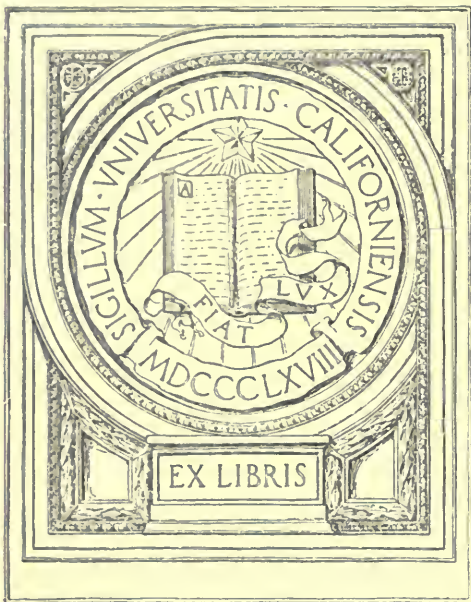




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KRIDER'S  
SPORTING ANECDOTES,

ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE HABITS OF

CERTAIN VARIETIES

OF

AMERICAN GAME.

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EDITED BY H. MILNOR KLAPP.

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PHILADELPHIA:  
A. HART, LATE CAREY & HART,  
126 CHESTNUT STREET.  
1853.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1853, by

JOHN KRIDER,

in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, for the Eastern  
District of Pennsylvania.

J. H. JONES, PRINTER.  
34 Carter's Alley.

5K  
313  
1895

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TO

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THE SPORTSMEN

OF

AMERICA,

THIS BOOK IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY THE AUTHOR.

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## PREFACE.

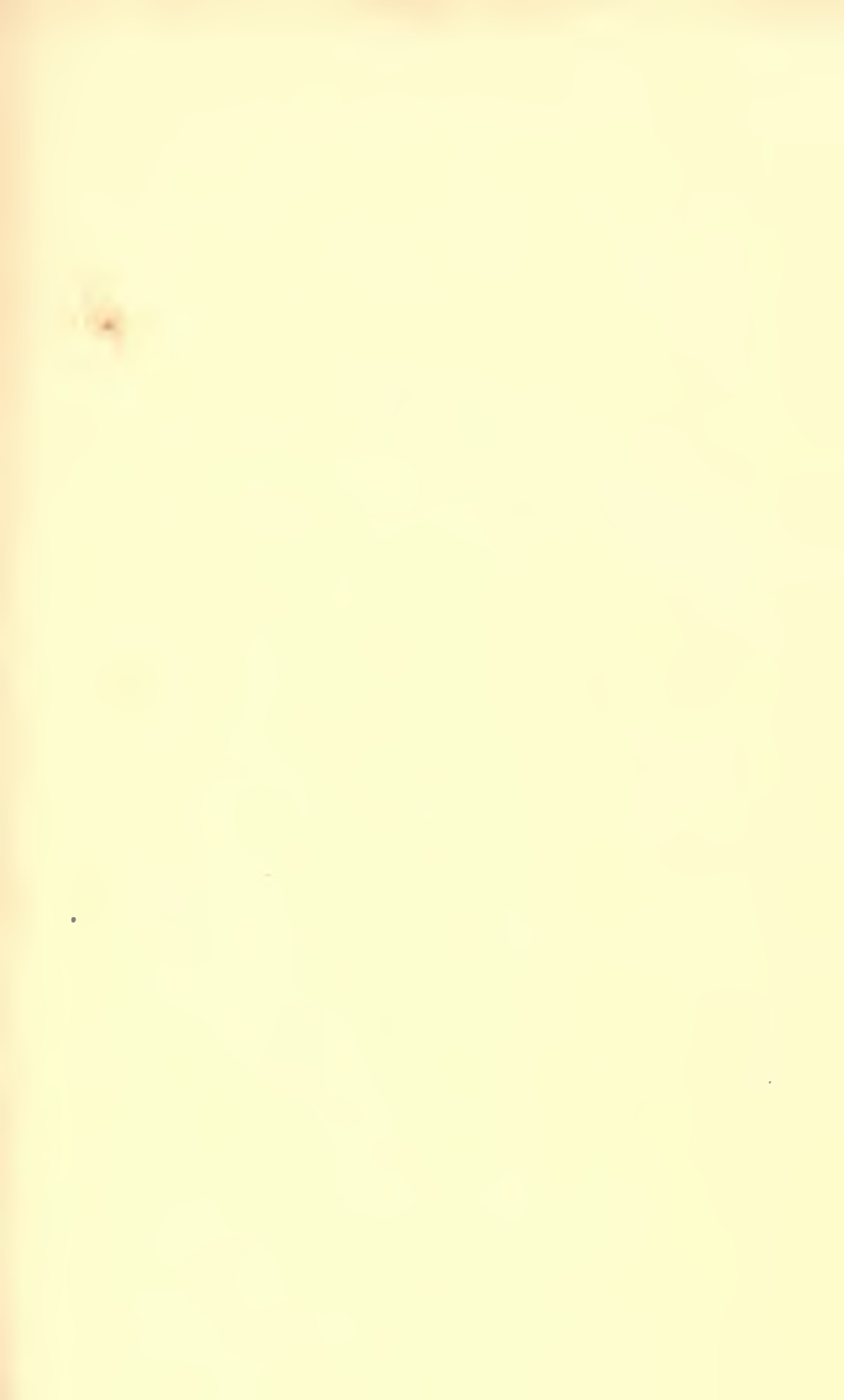
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In offering these unpretending pages to the public, it is simply the wish of the author and his editor to draw its attention more particularly to American field sports, and the reader will soon find, that, avoiding the tedium of a regular treatise or manual, we speak right on, with the hope to interest and amuse. If successful in this, our point is gained.



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## KRIDER'S SPORTING ANECDOTES.

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### FAMILIAR INTRODUCTORY REMARKS ON THE CHARACTER OF THE DOG.

It has always seemed to us a thing worthy of note that the dog alone, of the entire brute creation, should especially attach himself to man. Many instances are, indeed, upon record where animals of a different species have manifested an extraordinary affection for particular individuals. Among the Arabs, by whom the animal is humanely treated, the horse stands pre-eminent in this respect; and who has not read of the Cossack's steed, which

“Obeyed his voice and came to call,  
And knew him in the midst of all,  
Though thousands were around, and night,  
Without a star, pursued her flight.”

This, which would seem sufficiently poetic as related of the horse, is literally a matter of fact with the dog, whom Byron, as every one knows, has selected, in more instances than

one, to satirize mankind. However, misanthropy apart, in sober prose it cannot be denied, that from the moment Dash opens his eyes on external things, he recognizes the presence of man, and soon follows his footsteps as the humblest and most devoted of his servitors. Nay, many a sportsman has noticed the puppies of a litter, not yet arrived at the momentous ninth day, strive to lick the hand which caressed them, and watched the superannuated pointer leave his bed in the shade, and still cheerily constant to his text, totter on to the field at the heels of his master. Perhaps the reader has often been amused, in the street, when observing the air of grave importance with which one dog, after a brief colloquy with another, will hurry on to join his owner. There is something actually distressing, too, in the anxiety manifested in the looks, voice and actions of a lost dog. Superstition, as usual, has appropriated to herself the prolonged and melancholy howl, with which he seems to abandon himself to despair, when his search has proved unavailing, and night, in a strange place, settles down at last upon his houseless head. On such occasions he will often seat himself on his haunches beneath the nearest window, and, pointing his nose towards heaven, appal the ears of

the inmates with his boding and ill-omened cry. One may readily imagine the effect produced in the sick chamber, or at the family fire-side, by these disheartening sounds. If, like the wandering harper, he intends his distracting discord as an appeal to the sympathies of the good people within, it is almost superfluous to say that his expectations are illy repaid, since we have no doubt that the reader will agree with us that there hardly exists, within the range of the census, that super-excellent Samaritan, who has ever opened his heart or his doors to a stray cur. The cry, however, like that of the famishing wolf, appears to be a mere ebullition of despair. Some dogs, however, whose dispositions, we are inclined to think, are slightly tinged with romance, are much in the habit of serenading "the refulgent queen of night," in this interesting way. In general, though, be it said, the dog's star is his master's eye, and he wisely leaves the celestial orbs to poets, lovers and astronomers, as those whom they most concern. We have never heard that the dog of our North American Indian differs at all from his civilized brother in this last respect, although, in accordance with the untutored creed of his master, he might, with great consistency, cast an occasional glance towards the

happy hunting grounds, when game was especially scarce in the terrestrial forests. In large cities, where the dog is seldom called upon to fight, or even die, for his master, with a whimsical degree of apprehension he is observant to share in his every humor, whether it be to chase strange cats in the garden, dive for stones in a horse-bucket, point a partridge in a basket, or, *semper re composita*, to take a strut with the dandies on the sidewalk. But there is one thing which he drops his tail against, and therein consists his claim to gentility—*he has a soul above work*. Travellers may tell you long stories about the dogs of Labrador and Newfoundland, and even in our own land you may occasionally hear of a butter churn, a small threshing machine, or something of that sort, turned by dogs; but take our word for it, that in these very instances, which they make so much noise about, the animal is reduced from a state of humble companionship to that of absolute slavery, and that every moment's labor eked out of him is through pure fear of the lash. The sledge dogs, by their incessant snarling and fighting in gears, sufficiently show their abhorrence of the system; let but a wild reindeer cross their path through the snow, and off goes the entire pack in full chase, regardless

of sledge or driver, from the incumbrance of the last of which they, indeed, speedily rid themselves. We have heard it acknowledged in the far west, where Tray has sometimes been set to churn or to spin, that, like most other unwilling servitors, if not closely watched, he is seldom to be found when his services are most particularly required. The man who would advocate the propriety of placing a dog in a cart or a treadmill, deserves to be shunned by the entire canine race; and where, we would ask, is the Pharisee of such superlative leaven as to deny all sympathy with that scarcely less noble being, whom the proudest monarchs and mightiest minds of the universe, in every age, have made their companion?

What! force Hark, Beppo, Towser and Dash—not to speak of Silver, Mountain and Blanche, whom Shakspeare has immortalized—*force these to work!* Why, what would the dogs of Egypt, who once had divine honors paid to them, say to this? Reflect, gentle reader, how our Leatherstocking—that familiar and much admired creation of the genius which has recently died from among us—reflect how he would have looked, if some pumpkin-headed squatter had demanded the loan of his hound, to set in a rustic tread-



mill. We think we see the indignant old hunter grasping "Killdeer" like a vice, as, with backwoods emphasis, he tells the oaf that "the thing aire out of reason and agin all natur." When your dog degenerates and becomes vicious, then, if you are conscientiously opposed to capital punishment, condemn him, if you please, to hard labor; but while he is equal to the sample of his race, ennobled as it is by the unanimous decree of mankind, for your sake, as well as his own, treat him accordingly.

We will now, with the reader's permission, relate an example of the curious effect which this forced derogation of character, once produced on the conduct of a respectable house-dog.

A gentleman was walking along the main street of the fine old borough of Germantown, when he was met by a large dog harnessed to a sort of tilbury, in which was seated a diminutive invalid, the son of a storekeeper in the place. The boy held the lines in his hand, with an important look on his pale face; but the aspect of the dog was sulky and *malapropos*, as if keenly conscious of his degradation. With his tail down and his ears back, he moved on slowly and unwillingly enough, until a setter, which was in attendance upon the pedestrian, came up, and halting on the

pike, cocked his ears, perhaps with concern at the pitiful condition to which the unfortunate custodian of the threshold was reduced. No sooner had the sullen eyes of the latter fallen upon the free and life-like figure of Beppo, than, uttering a savage growl, he flew from the elevated sidewalk full at the other's throat, pitching out the invalid, overturning the Tom Thumb tilbury, and scouring along the road after the innocent cause of the catastrophe, who, upon being thus charged, as it were, by a chariot, fled as if death were at his heels. Whether, in this case, the grocer's dog imagined that he detected something quizzical in the expression of the setter's face, or was merely infuriated at the difference of their respective conditions at the moment, is a matter of doubt. The effect produced, however, was solely attributable to the presence of the stranger's dog, since it appeared that the boy had been daily in the habit of airing himself in this way for some time previous. The fugitive took sanctuary with our jovial host of the Buttonwood, and the assailant, it concerns us to state, received a severe threshing for his indirect though outrageous exertions in favor of canine freedom.

Dogs have been known to form offensive and

defensive alliances with each other, which, like those of the princes of the earth, are liable to abrupt and disagreeable conclusions.

A physician of this city had in his stable a terrier, which formed a league of this kind with an individual of the same stock, belonging to a sugar refiner in the vicinity. The chief end of this alliance, it was observed, was to mount guard at a corner of the court on which the stable was located, and make battle with any thing in the shape of perambulating dog flesh which might happen to pass that way. Now, there lived, about a square above the court, a Dutch baker, who possessed a large dog, which regularly attended his master as he went his morning rounds, with "the staff of life" on his shoulder. This was a quiet, sleek, well-intentioned animal, but a few months out of the days of his puppyhood. His name was Tim, and we can safely aver that he was a dog of repute, harboring no evil designs of any kind in his head; which, to tell the truth, was very far from being the case with the two terriers.

Time after time had the latter assailed and beaten the baker's dog, and no redress could the sufferer obtain, except, perhaps, when some vagrant boy, in his zeal for fair play, would shy

a stone at the heads of the two bullies. The people of the neighborhood were too busy to attend to the quarrels of dogs; so that, unless the fates interfered in some unforeseen way, there really appeared to be no salvation for Tim, since, in the ordinary course of things, there was every prospect that the breath of life was eventually to be worried out of his nostrils.

Months passed away, and the dog increased in size and strength, but the evil under which he had so long howled was by no means abated. So far from it, indeed, that he was now obliged to leave the baker every morning at the first street above the court, and make the circuit of the square to escape the expectant fangs of these two sons of Cerberus.

We have no doubt that this troubled Tim exceedingly, for a close observer of these sagacious animals will tell you, that if there is any thing which a faithful dog takes a praiseworthy pride in, it is in appearing to the best advantage in the eyes of his master. It is but fair to state that the two tyrants sometimes engaged in terrible combats with strange dogs, and that, so far as we can learn, they invariably came off victorious. No doubt these desperate contests, witnessed from afar, struck additional terror into the heart of Tim.

However, it so happened, that upon a certain New Year's day, as the doctor and the sugar refiner were conversing in the street, they saw the baker coming towards them, with his sleek, black dog behind him. The two tyrants, as usual, were sitting at the corners of the court, on the *qui vive*—the bigger, whose name was Flame, ensconced on a fire-plug, and the lesser, who was called Smoke, watching under a lamp-post. The name of the court, we had forgotten to state, was Concord Place, which was somewhat at variance with the character of its guardians, although Relief alley, a narrow passage directly opposite, was no misnomer, so far as it is connected with the anecdote, inasmuch as it had often saved Tim, at need, from the teeth of his determined assailants.

“Now,” said the doctor, “let us watch the motions of these three dogs.”

“I have often noticed them before,” said the other, “and the baker's will certainly leave him at the next street.”

But whether it was that the evil had arrived at that pitch at which endurance ceases to be a virtue, even in a dog, or that the day being the first of the year, Tim was determined to begin it, *more magistri*, with a new talley, is open to free



discussion; we only, as historians, faithfully chronicle the fact, that, with head and tail erect, deviating not a hair's breadth from his route, Tim sturdily stuck at the Dutchman's heels.

The two tyrants bristled their spines, erected their cropt ears, and waited for the moment to pounce upon him. The baker stopped at a customer's door, delivered his bread, and passed on; Tim followed; Flame glanced at Smoke, and, as was the rule of warfare observed by the belligerents, the latter advanced to commence the onslaught, nothing doubting of an easy victory.

But the instant that he came sufficiently near, Tim, the late meek and gentle disciple of endurance, savagely seized him by the back, and lifting him clear from the ground, shook him in a manner which, however delightful to the doctor, must have been as disagreeable as unexpected to *him*.

"Served him exactly right," said the sugar refiner, gruffly, while the doctor cried *encore*; and a quick eye, accustomed to read the physiognomies of quadrupeds, might have noticed something of unpleasant surprise in the looks of the chief tyrant. Nevertheless, quickly descending from his post of observation, he boldly advanced to the rescue of his comrade, who was no

match for Tim, now that his ire was fully awakened.

The beholders were now all expectation to see what the baker's dog would do in this emergency. The result was not long in doubt; for, as Flame approached, Tim gave Smoke a last severe shake, which effectually settled him for the nonce, and meeting his chief assailant half way, grappled him with a fury, which, as he was really the stronger dog of the two, landed him on his back in the kennel, in a moment.\* Smoke, beholding this with increased dismay, fled in inglorious haste, through Relief alley, leaving the field to the two remaining combatants, who fought vigorously for a few minutes longer, the one loath to lose his ancient supremacy, and the other determined to provide anew for the contingencies of the future. At length the scale of victory turned—the doctor's dog cried *miserecordia*; and Tim, after fairly vanquishing the two redoubtable tyrants, trotted on, like a knight-errant of old, to rejoin the baker's banner.

“Now,” said the doctor, “that dog has taught us a lesson, which the crowned heads of Europe might read with advantage.”

“Yes,” answered the other; and he must have premeditated the action, for, to my certain know-

ledge, nothing could have previously induced him to pass that court when your dog or mine was in sight."

"It looks very like the reasoning power, I confess," said the doctor; "but see, here comes your dog back."

The most curious part of the affair now occurred; for as Smoke came nigh to Flame, for the purpose, no doubt, of comparing injuries, the latter, who was licking his wounds, instantly flew upon him, and, without paying the least regard to their former relations, inflicted upon him a tremendous mauling. At this sight the physician, unwilling to lose his professional gravity in the street, started instanter for his office; while the sugar refiner, albeit not possessed of so quick a sense of the ludicrous, retreated to a counting room in a huge smoky building across the way. The alliance was, however, dissolved, and the two discomfitted tyrants were never seen together from that instant.

In this anecdote, for the truth of which we can vouch, we have strikingly displayed, first, a mutual understanding, resulting in a regular alliance for the purpose of aggressive warfare; next, endurance, amounting almost to abject cowardice, on the part of a third dog; then a noble resolu-

tion to resist oppression to the last; and, lastly, a violent dissolution of the league, consequent upon the signal defeat of the two tyrants.

We will now relate a few examples of the inveterate pertinacity with which dogs that have once worried sheep, seize every opportunity of indulging, by stealth, in their flagitious inclinations; of the cunning which they display in endeavoring to elude detection, and of the artifices which they make use of, to induce other better disposed individuals to join them in their marauding expeditions. These have been long known to the world, and still furnish a favorite theme, on a winter's night, at the farmer's fire-side.

Not a villager but has his say on the subject; not a herdsman but can add his woful experience of the slaughter. Sixty, seventy, and even a hundred sheep, worried in a single night, have been the astounding effects of this destructive propensity. In parts of the country where large flocks are raised, the dog, as representing his race, figures full as often in the imagination of the youthful grazier on the prongs of a good steel pitchfork, as he does, when arrayed in his glory, as "honest Tray" or "faithful Towser," of the school book.

- Short shrift is accorded to the robber, when caught red-footed and in the act, or tracked from the scene of blood, through the tell-tale snow, to the unconscious homestead.

Vain are the entreaties of the house-wife or children, if, indeed, they find voices to plead for the midnight assassin, who, apart from his secret acts of villainy, may have been a very serviceable animal. The master himself has little to say, since slay the dog or pay for the sheep is the grim alternative. The axe, the rope, or the fowling piece, settles the matter on the spot; while the very porch, which has so long sheltered the culprit, seems half aghast with silent horror.

The propensity, which is chiefly confined to curs and mongrels, undoubtedly descends from the wild state of the race, along with other peculiarities of less import, common to the entire species; such as making lairs in out of the way places, hiding bones and surplus food in the earth, taking solitary journeys at night, sometimes to visit an acquaintance, but more frequently to hunt up mischief.

A dog has been known to leave his home after the family had retired, and go to a farm-house several miles distant, to join a comrade; after some preliminary snuffing and capering on the porch, the

two have started for a third farm, six miles from the first, and worried sheep. In this instance each animal was found in his house before sunrise, and it was only by their tracks in the snow that their misdeeds were brought home to them.

All this reminds us strongly of the wolf. The following incident, said to have occurred many years ago, in the state of Virginia, west of the Blue Ridge, bears a still closer comparison with the deeds of that wily and ferocious animal.

A storekeeper, in a village in that part of the country, possessed a remarkably intelligent dog, of the mixed Poodle and Newfoundland stock. He was of service to his master in guarding his property, and had been taught to do many useful things, which had become the talk of the country side. He would convey parcels home to a customer, carry his master's boots to the shoemaker, search diligently for any thing which had been lost in the fields or the roadside, patiently watch an article to which his attention had been directed, and really seemed to comprehend any command which was given him.

Having been well cared for, in spite of the cross, he had attained an extraordinary size, and was possessed of great activity for so heavy an animal. His coat was coarse and heavy; and, in

allusion to its tawny color and something of magnanimity in his looks, he was called Lion. Of a mild, peaceable disposition, though brave as his royal namesake, he was a favorite with all visitors to the store, and only an object of terror and dislike to thieves and marauders. His master had refused large offers for him; and at the period to which we particularly refer, he was in the very prime of his days.

About five miles north-west of the village and three from the main road, was a track of hilly land, known in the township as the Hampton farm, a large portion of which was devoted to the rearing of sheep.

The Hampton farm had, at different periods, suffered, as was supposed, from depredations of wolves, which, though becoming scarce in the forests of the vicinity, were still occasionally to be met with.

For more than a year not an individual had been shot in the township; nevertheless, sheep were still worried, from time to time, and suspicion at last fell upon the dogs of the neighborhood. But the strictest scrutiny failed to detect a single plague spot; and, accordingly, the whole corporation of curs was pronounced to be sound.

The charge then reverted to the wolves; but,



though traps were set on the hills, and a watch kept, no signs of a wolf could be perceived.

A few nights after vigilance had been relaxed, a sheepcot was broken into, and a number of the flock either slain outright or so mangled as to render it necessary to put the knife to their throats.

The grazier and his men were greatly enraged at this, and a price of twenty dollars—a large sum for the neighborhood—was forthwith set upon the depredator's head.

From the circumstance of there being no snow upon the ground at the time, it was, of course, impossible to track him; but a close inspection of the premises established the fact, that the animal was alone and of unusual size. From this the conclusion was arrived at that it was a wolf, which had its den at a great distance, most probably in the mountains at the foot of which the farm was located.

Several good hunters turned out with their dogs, but utterly failed to strike the trail, although the search was continued for several days. At last, however, it so chanced that as one of these men was crossing a piece of waste land between the sheephills and the main road, an hour or two before dawn, he saw, by the waning light of the



moon, an animal, which he immediately conjectured to be a wolf, rising an elevation on his left, at a long, loping pace, making, it appeared, for a run about two hundred yards distant.

The man stopped and cocked his rifle, but having no dog with him—his own having been worn out with the previous day's run—prudently forbore to fire so long as there existed a doubt of his being able to sight a mortal part. The creature passed him at full speed, directing its course for the run, whither the hunter cautiously followed. He soon perceived that it had broken the ice, and halted in the water, and under cover of inequalities in the ground, he was enabled to steal, unperceived, within good covering distance. Taking deliberate aim, he pulled the trigger, and the brute, leaping up with a loud yell, dropped dead on the bank. The hunter carefully reloaded his rifle, loosened his knife in its sheath, and, with his finger at the guard of his piece, slowly advanced to the spot; when, lo! instead of a grey wolf, to his utter amazement, he immediately recognized, even by the imperfect light, the lifeless but still quivering carcass of the storekeeper's favorite dog.

After his astonishment had a little subsided, he took off the scalp, and leaving the body where

it fell, made the best of his way to the grazier's house.

The body of the recreant, suspended by the neck in a wagon, was driven in triumph down to the village, and subsequent inquiries left not a lingering doubt that Lion, with all his remarkable qualities, was, after all, but a wolf in dog's habiliments.

It was remembered that at certain periods he had refused his food, and appeared sleepy and cross; and, upon comparing dates, the parties concerned discovered that these were the very days after the havoc had been committed.

He was actually engaged in washing the blood of six sheep from his body when the hunter shot him; and, upon being satisfied of this, the whole village, with the bereaved storekeeper at their head, while they could not help deploring the end of so fine an animal, sang *Te Deum* over the fall of so accomplished a villain.

The honest hunter received his reward, and was ever afterwards known by the *soubriquet* of "Sampson," inasmuch as it was he who slew the Lion.

All half-grown puppies, from a natural fondness for mischief, which instigates them to tear a hat or a shawl to shreds, and to pursue any

object that flies from them, have a disposition to chase sheep. A single timely correction is sufficient to cure this; but when a dog once indulges in sheep killing by stealth, the chain becomes an imperfect check upon the habit, and it is advisable, in all cases, to subject him to farmer's law. A popular English writer has said: "in the human mind, ill regulated, there is a dark desire for the forbidden;" the same remark, in certain cases, is applicable to the dog. Among all the instances which have come under our notice, we remember but one in which the animal was influenced by necessity, and not from choice. The nearer the dog approaches to purity in stock, the nobler is his character, and the less he is addicted to evil ways.

We have never heard the clean bred pointer accused of sheep killing. The setter is not so free from taint. Indeed, he has been known, in one instance, at least, to forsake his professional business and assail a flock of sheep, which has come in his way in the course of a day's sport. This dog, said to have been an imported English stock, unaccountably left his master, in the stubbles, and a few minutes afterwards was actually seen, by the proprietor of the land, throttling sheep in an adjoining field. The man

set off to his house for the gun, and during his absence, the dog, recalled by his master's whistle, returned to his side, ranged out, and pointed; then stealing away, while the shooter was charging, went back to his nefarious work, just as the avenger of innocence, armed with one of those long-stocked, old-fashioned pieces, which so often sent death into the British ranks in the days of '76, made his timely appearance upon the scene. The ancient revolutioner was promptly levelled, and, of course, the malefactor died the death.

He was in his third year, and, as far as could be ascertained, this was his first transgression.

We have heard of another case, where a setter, suspected of a similar piece of atrocity, was penned up for the night with a pugnacious old ram, who, it was supposed, would not fail to kill or cure him before morning.

The supposition was ill-founded, however, for at daylight the patriarch of the flock was found stark and stiff, with his throat terribly torn, while the setter, wholly uninjured, was wagging his tail to get out.

There is a loping dog, a cross between the pointer and setter—sometimes rough and sometimes smooth—which we would caution our young readers to have nothing to do with. There

is a taint of the hound or cur in his back stock; he has no style in his hunting, is occasionally sullen and ferocious, displays comparatively little affection for his master, and often proves to be an inveterate sheep-killer.

Mr. Krider once owned a dog of this description, which was possessed of no good qualities, except an excellent nose and great steadiness on his point. He was gaunt, coarse-coated, had a gloomy and reserved air, as if constantly brooding over his misdeeds, and showed so little concern for his master's interests as to be constantly snarling and snapping at his customers. Being unwilling to slay the brute, and supposing that his temper was tried in the store, his owner presented him to one of his workmen. In a few days he bit the man's wife, when his new master incontinently discharged a load of buckshot in his breast, and dismissed Growler to the shades forever. Some time after his exit, the farmer from whom he had been purchased, acknowledged that he had strongly suspected him of destroying sheep.

What a contrast to these renegades does the well-known shepherd's dog of the old world present! His instinct, said to be superior to all other varieties, is solely directed to the preservation of the flock.

How faithfully, how completely, he fulfils the duties of a guardian, the reader is, doubtless, well aware. In the vast *fazendas*, or cattle estates, of southern Brazil, where the flocks have a multitude of enemies, two dogs are considered sufficient to shepherd a thousand sheep. But these dogs, as soon as whelped, are suckled by a ewe; no food is given to them; at night they are shut up in the fold; during the day they accompany the flock to the field; and when full grown, instinctively assume the office of its guardian and protector. While the flock is grazing, the vigilance of the guardian, directed alike against the hordes of wild dogs, which infest the plains, and the birds of prey, which pick out the eyes of the lambs, is argus-eyed and unceasing. When a ewe lambs in the field, and the lamb is too weak to follow its mother, one dog will remain for some time beside it; if he finds that it is still unable to walk, as evening draws near, he carefully takes it in his mouth and carries it home to the fold.

They have the same wild and melancholy aspect, and the same indisposition to associate with strange dogs, which distinguishes the shepherd's dog of the Alps and the Pyrenees.

Here the naturalist has a grand picture for contemplation and study, for here we have ex-

hibited, in a curious light, two traits which most ennoble the dog—fidelity and courage. Now to shift the portrait.

Some of our readers will remember to have noticed, a year or two since, three dogs, without masters, wandering together about the streets of the city—sometimes seen lying, side by side, on a door step, or in the shade of a garden wall; sometimes foraging in the alleys and empty market houses; but from their deformed appearance, constant companionship, and absolute disconnection with man, always impressing the mind of the beholder with a feeling of desolation strangely foreign to the scene. One, a female, with a broken limb, curiously distorted, was a gaunt, hollow-eyed brute, upon whose infirmities the others seemed to attend, as we observed that she was always the first to move on after a halt; another, an old mongrel mastiff, had lost his upper lip, which gave him a very unsightly look; but the third was perfect in his parts—a meek, mild-eyed cur, who appeared to have joined the two misanthropes because he had been fairly forsaken by the rest of the world.

There was something strongly expressive of apathetical indifference to the beings around them, in the aspect of the two first. Strictly

shunning the society of their race, they seemed an isolated community in the midst of strangers. The human voice, no matter how kindly tempered, produced no visible effect, except to make them move listlessly on. The last would acknowledge sympathy with man, by wagging his tail when spoken to; but no artifice could induce him to loiter behind, when his companions had once resumed their way.

Some mysterious feeling appeared to bind them inseparably together. They never disagreed, and were always in good condition. We have been assured, by a gentleman of the highest respectability, that his family have repeatedly seen the last, when food was offered him, quietly go and deposit it at the feet of his friends.

And thus, for several successive seasons, the strange trio were seen in various parts of the crowded city—always together, and always by themselves—lodging, no one cared where, and eventually disappearing, no one knew how.\*

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\* One fact, which had nearly escaped our memory, while it proves that even the maternal instinct did not interfere with their bond of attachment, goes to show that the female must, at the period referred to, have had some place of shelter. The last time we saw them, her appearance indicated that she had littered but a few days previous; but where her whelps were concealed, or where she rejoined her companions on their daily rounds, we are unable to say.



We have no comments to offer upon this singular alliance. Bulwer, in his "Children of Night," makes Messrour, the immortal, say, that in a period of five thousand years, spent in the study of man, he had not yet discovered the mysteries in the heart of a boor; how then, shall we attempt to pry through that impenetrable veil which the Creator of all things, in his Omniscience, has placed between man made after his own image, and the brutes over which he has given him sway?

Dogs sometimes manifest a taste for the sweets of liberty in rather a whimsical way.

A friend of ours once owned a beautiful setter, who, unfortunately, preferring a wilderness to a garden, uprooted rose-bushes, grubbed up geraniums, tore down grape vines, and made bone depositories of strawberry beds. He was, of course, put on chain. On the first opportunity he disappeared, and for weeks nothing was heard of his whereabouts. At last they found him in the street, with a collar on his neck, bearing the name and residence of a new owner. An explanation ensued, when it was discovered that he had attached himself to the person in question, with whom he had been residing ever since his disappearance, and in whose company he had

repeatedly passed his old master's residence, without manifesting the least signs of recognition. Indeed, from his apparent indifference to all parts of the city, and his off-hand way of domiciliating in his new quarters, it had been supposed that he had strayed away from some stranger, *en route* to a distant part of the country. He was again chained to his old dog-house, and, in the course of time, again escaped. A month elapsed, and his disconsolate master, while in the act of leaving Mr. Krider's store, situated on the north-east corner of Second and Walnut streets, between the two principle market houses of the city, again encountered his lost property, in excellent condition—this time hand and glove with a butcher's boy, who was carrying home a basket of meat.

Our friend at once stopped short, planting himself before the bulkhead, directly in the dog's way.

The animal passed the critical spot with the utmost *nonchalance*, and was wending his way to parts unknown, when his master, provoked as well as amused with the cut direct, pronounced, in a voice of thunder, the awful word "Mart!"

"I really thought," said he, in relating the anecdote,

dote, "the dog would have sunk down through the bricks. It was laughable to notice the rueful countenance of the scapegrace, as he crouched on the pavement, with a slight twitch of his tail, one eye fixed imploringly on me, and the other turned towards the boy, over whose chubby face was beginning to steal the conviction that they two must part. The affair reminded me strongly, at the moment, of two line's in one of Scott's border ballads, which may thus be parodied :

The conscious cur fell to the ground,  
And inly muttered, 'found! found! found!'

It is now some years since Mart slipped his collar *in toto*, for he continued in his vagrant habits to the last, at one time attaching himself to a rigger in Reed street, and upon another to a recruiting sergeant of marines. Influenced by his impatience of restraint, he may, possibly, have gone off to join the Mormons.

His master, with a pertinacity almost as humorous, insists upon it that he will yet turn up, when least expected, and is yearly in the habit of visiting the menagerie, in the hopes of finding him attached to a caravan.

This dog was of hardy constitution, a great ranger, and uniformly travelled a fast gait.

Dogs are a superstitious race. We have seen

them tremble and skulk from the sight of their shadows moving on the wall. Like horses, they are subject to violent paroxysms of fright. We have heard of a watch-dog that was frightened into convulsions by the sudden apparition of a man in a white coat; and the most curious exhibition of mortal fear which we ever witnessed, was consequent upon the introduction of an Isle of Sky dog to a hideous Paraguay ape.

Dogs dream. We have seen the animal start on its legs from an uneasy slumber, and bark vaguely, yet vehemently, as if at some object in the shadow land. On being spoken to it ceased at once, and, whining and mumbling, again addressed itself to sleep. No doubt can be entertained of the fact that, in some degree, at least, their "lives are two-fold," and that they sometimes re-enact in sleep the drama of their waking hours.

A merchant of this city was possessed of a poodle, which for years had been in the habit of bringing him his boots at a certain hour in the morning, preparatory to their usual walk to the counting room. The dog usually slept at the foot of the staircase, at the second landing of which was an entry, leading to his master's bed-chamber.

The latter was once aroused, at the dead hour of night, by a strange scratching at the door, which being cautiously opened, old Hugo walked slowly in, with his eyes wide open and a boot in his mouth. He gravely deposited this at the merchant's feet and started for its fellow, but, upon being called back and reproved, seemed at once to comprehend his mistake.

He then took up the boot, and as the voice of the watchman sounded the hour, looking ridiculously enough, sneaked down stairs to bed again.

This is the only case of somnambulism in the brute creation, which we remember to have heard of.

The same person was afterwards attacked by a fit of the gout, which confined him to his house several weeks.

On the morning succeeding the attack the boots appeared in his chamber, as usual; the invalid pointed to his swollen feet, swathed in flannel and resting upon pillows, whereupon the poodle, mistaking his meaning, flew furiously at the bandages, and commenced tearing them off, giving the unfortunate sufferer the most exquisite agony in his well-meant but injudicious attempts to remove the embargo on the boots.

But to come nearer home. Observe your dog

when he feeds—how his tail goes and his eyes pour out thankfulness! At every mouthful he looks up to show his gratitude. We will venture to say that few Christians feel a livelier sense of devotion at their meals. If he indulges in any mirth at his dinner, it is all of a grateful order. The hand which feeds him is his divinity, and, of course, he looks no higher in returning his thanks.

Turn now to his distant connexion, the cat. How she growls, like a tiger over its prey! Mark how she gorges, only purring and looking with fierce eyes for more when the last morsel is finished. After that, she washes her whiskers with a world-wise air, and the entire line of Adam is nothing to her until she grows hungry again.

There is a deal of point, after all, in the juvenile line :

“Behold Miss Pussy! how happy she looks!”

We have a sort of reverence for the authority of the little book quoted from.

It is ever associated in our mind with the person of a deceased old lady, who, we believe, led half the people in the district in which we were born, through its pictured pages.

It will not do, gentle reader, to cavil at its couplets. If Grimalkin is happy, as the learned

authority intimates, let us not inquire too closely into the sources of her tranquility. Let us rather go back to Ponto, whom we left quietly eating his dinner.

Well he repays, by a lifetime of fidelity, all the care which you may bestow upon him. Whatever class of dogs he may belong to, according to his capacity, he will studiously contribute to your interests or your sports.

He is invaluable to the sportsman and the agriculturist, and the careful housekeeper will hardly sleep sound o' nights, unless Towser be loose in the yard.

He is fond of fun, too, and really epicurean in his mode of seeking comfort. Much he prizes a snug, warm lodging in winter, and a perfect luxury it is to see him enjoying a roll upon the sunny sod on some cool, clear day in the fall, when the north-west wind is stripping the trees, and the plaintive calls of the covey, scattered, perhaps, by the hawk, are heard over by the stubble-field.

It is a pleasant thing, too, to see him lying close in the woods, watching your eye as you stand, while the last rays of the setting sun redden the solemn trunks, and still communing with autumn, you feel, as it were, the breath of

of winter afar off, as a chill wind sighs through the fading foliage, or mournfully rustles the withered leaves. Poor Ponto! though he feel not the strange delight which waits upon the change of season—though he knows not the twilight hour, yet well it becomes him to live the comrade of kings and princes, and well he deserves to be remembered by the genius which hallows the scene.

Bulwer, Burns, Byron and Scott, have all owned strong sympathies with the dog.

If our young friends should be fond of field sports, they should never rate the value of Ponto solely by his professional accomplishments of finding and pointing game. As he is the zealous adjutor and partaker of your diversions, he should also, in some measure, be your companion and your friend.

You may smile, but well will it be with you, when the flush of youth is passed, if you do not then rate his fidelity higher than the standard of friendship, as it exists *in the gay world*.

You will find nothing superior in pathos to the tales which are told of the faithfulness of the dog.

It is not many months since we saw in the public prints, an account of a party of hunters,



who had discovered, in the far west, the corpse of an Indian, extended on the prairie, surrounded by a gang of wolves, which a famishing dog still kept at bay. What a picture for an artist to delineate, and how forcibly it reminds us of the touching lines of the poet!

“ And he was faithful to a corpse,  
And kept the birds and beasts  
Which hungered there, at bay.”

When those whom you are most bound to love and reverence, have passed down to the grave—when friends fall off, and the darker side of humanity becomes more and more apparent, as you walk through life—then, and not till then, you may learn to prize the fidelity of a dog.

His leaping heart is still for thine,  
Without a thought of guile,  
And in his eyes his truth doth shine,  
As beauty may not smile.

## SNIFE SHOOTING.

WILSON'S SNIFE—SCOLOPAX WILSONII.

*Description.*—"The snipe is eleven inches long, and seventeen in extent; the bill is more than two and a half inches long, fluted lengthwise, of a brown color, and black towards the tip, where it is very smooth while the bird is alive, but soon after it is killed, becomes dimpled, like the end of a thimble; crown black, divided by an irregular line of pale brown; another broader one, of the same tint, passes over each eye; from the bill to the eye, there is a narrow, dusky line; neck and upper part of the breast pale brown, variegated with touches of white and dusky; chin, pale; back and scapulars, deep velvety black, the latter elegantly marbled with waving lines of ferruginous, and broadly edged exteriorly with white; wings plain dusky, all the feathers, as well as those of the coverts, tipped with white; shoulder of the wing, deep dusky brown, exterior quill, edged with white; tail coverts long, reaching within three-quarters of an inch of the tip, and of a pale

rust color, spotted with black; tail rounded, deep black, ending in a bar of bright ferruginous, crossed with narrow, waving lines of black, and tipped with whitish; belly, pure white; sides, barred with dusky; legs and feet, a very pale ashy green; sometimes the whole thighs and sides of the vent are tarred with dusky and white. The female is more obscure in her colors; the white on the belly being less pure, and the black on the back not so deep."

The winter of 183— had been very severe in the middle and eastern states.

In Pennsylvania it was marked by high winds, heavy falls of snow, and unusually low depressions of the mercury.

Deer, floundering in the deep drifts, were killed in great numbers by the hunters of the upper districts, and in the counties adjoining Philadelphia the smaller varieties of game nearly all perished. Grouse and hares were starved out in the hills, or fell an easy prey to the foxes; partridges came and fed from the threshing-floors; larks were found dead in the hay-ricks; crows alit upon the offals in the barnyard; and it became necessary to keep the poultry housed, and their crops well filled, to save them from the hawks, or from freezing to death on their roosts.

About the middle of February the severity of the season abated. The mercury rose to a genial mark; the sky became beautifully clear and cloudless; the ground thawed; the snow rapidly disappeared; and in a few days the notes of the song-sparrow and the blue-bird, gave cheering intimations of the near approach of spring.

Some old farmers in our vicinity professed little faith in the assurances of these welcome visitors. Sagely shaking their heads, they husbanded their hay-stacks, as they still looked askant at the hills and the blue air; but as the weather, uninfluenced by their forebodings, still continued mild, we made much of every warbled note, and turned a deaf ear to the croakers, willing to believe that the Solomons of meadow and upland were mistaken for once.

About this period we received, through the village post office, a note from an acquaintance in town, with an enclosed dispatch from old Pierson of the Pier, announcing, in his usual emphatic way, that the meadows above and below Pennsgrove, New Jersey, were fairly alive with snipe.

We had already observed woodcock flying in the evening twilight, and began to flush them, by day, in a woods of some extent, where they

had regularly bred for many years. Although then anxious to obtain a closer insight into the habits of these solitary and retiring birds, which, despite the observations of ornithologists, are still involved in a certain degree of mystery, we, of course, abandoned our investigations on the receipt of this intelligence, and summoning Czar, who was in fine health and spirits, doubtless anticipating work, set off at once for the city, and dropped into Krider's on the morning of the succeeding day.

Our arrangements were soon made, and well aware that, should the wind haul to the northwest, with a lowering sky, this flight of birds would leave the low grounds on the river, and seek shelter inland, we took the cars to Wilmington, intending to cross the Delaware to Pennsgrove, if possible, on the same afternoon.

On the road down we will, with the reader's permission, give a brief account of the game which we were in quest of, and of the description of dog, whether rough or smooth, most to be preferred in following in this exciting sport.

It may not be altogether superfluous to remind the general reader, that there is but one species of snipe, known to our sportsmen, which will lie to, and can be hunted with dogs. This is the

English snipe, once so called, but now, by general consent, named after the great American ornithologist who first pointed out the difference between it and the European variety. This difference, though apparently trifling, was sufficient, in the judgment of Temminck, Bonaparte, and other distinguished writers, to entitle it to the rank of a distinct species, universally known among naturalists of the present day as Wilson's snipe.

The other American varieties possess nothing to attract the pursuit of the sportsman, and are therefore abandoned, *sans ceremonie*, to the market shooter. The history of each will be found well marked and interesting in its place; but, *ne sutor ultra crepidam*, as a sophomore would say; we have no room for it here.

Wilson's snipe has been so often described in books, from the tip of the bill to the ends of the tail feathers, and is so well known, that we might almost forego the minute details of its dimensions and markings.

From the uncertainty attending its movements on the feeding grounds, the swiftness and eccentricity of its flight, the exposure and hard hunting required in its pursuit, the rare sport it often affords when found, its game-look as it

springs from the marshes, and when brought to bag, as well as its delicacy on the table, it has long been an object of especial interest to the keenest and most imaginative of our sportsmen. We have no doubt that one thing which makes snipe shooting pre-eminently attractive to some sportsmen, is the delightful state of uncertainty which now, more than ever, attends the pursuit of this species of game.

Partridge shooting, so long upheld as the beau ideal of sport, savors rather too much of the preserves to be exactly to the taste of a thorough hunter. In a country well stocked with game of this kind, whenever there are stubbles, at the proper time of day there you will find birds; and there is something in the half domesticated nature of this familiar little member of the gallinaceous order, in the loud, clear "*all right*" of the male, the tender and anxious calls of the scattered convey, and the extreme terror which they display in hiding away from the dogs, which, after a few brace are killed, half disarms many a reflective sportsman. With the snipe, on the contrary, we have no sympathies of this sort; he is not one of us, but, comparatively speaking, a sort of winged cosmopolite; is often wary and shy, and as soon as he springs, begins to exercise his ingenuity to

escape your aim—now darting, like a flash, in zigzag lines, and now soaring sky-high, as if to top the range of your piece.

Woodcock shooting in “the cripple” always reminds us of a party of madmen shouting and banging away at vampire bats, in the eternal twilight of some equatorial forests. Rail shooting, if practiced more than once or twice in a season, becomes too tiresome and monotonous to possess much interest, except for the sum total boated. Duck shooting is a noble diversion; but what thrill of expectation is equal to that which the sportsman feels, when, after a fruitless hunt over acres and acres of heavy ground, he beholds in the distance the trusty and indefatigable companion of his toil, standing steadily to his point at last—or what a more game sight than the grey, phantom-like look of the wandering snipe, as uttering its peculiar cry, it flits over a wild marsh, on a March or November day?

Being all open shooting, the shooter, of course, has an opportunity of observing all the movements of his dogs, and also of the bird after it has sprung; and on this account alone many shooters declare that they had rather have two days of good sport at snipe, than a whole season at part-ridges or rail.



But why are snipe uncertain in their movements on the feeding ground?

It is supposed to be owing, in some measure, to the nature of their food, and to the enormous quantity which they require, in common with other birds of their genus, and also to their susceptibility to the influences of the weather—at no season of the year more subject to sudden fluctuations of temperature than early in the spring. Always feeding from choice in open marshes, they may be found in sufficient numbers to afford excellent sport to-day, when the weather is moderately warm, and light clouds, borne on a brisk breeze from the south-west, cast their shadows on bare bog or tussock, as they drift over head. But should the wind shift, and come on to blow strong from the north-east, as is often the case during the night, the next morning you may traverse the marshes in vain, in the face of a lowering sky; the birds are off for cover; and unless you have a particular fancy to be detained three or four days in a snow storm, at a country inn, you had better be off, too, for you will have no more shooting on that excursion.

This is very apt to occur when the birds are in advance of the season, and has happened with us again and again in March, and even in April.

How often have shooters, knowing that birds were on the meadows below, and not wishing to start off on Friday or Saturday, postponed their departure until the following Monday, when a wet gale from the north-east has set in, and no further accounts of snipe have been received until the wind hauled to a more auspicious point.

Independent of this, some writers assert that the snipe is, naturally, of a restless and capricious disposition—that conscious of his powers of flight, he often whimsically takes to wing when none of the foregoing causes are known to exist, apparently delighting in his extent of range; and at last suddenly drops down from the field of air in some new feeding ground, miles and miles from the spot which he so unaccountably abandoned.

We have no serious objection to investing our favorite with this ethereal character, making him, so to speak, a sort of “dainty *Æriel*” to his own wild will; but we suspect, nevertheless, that he is not exactly like the renowned Scotch geese, who liked their play better than their food.

As his powers of digestion are equally well known with those of his flight, we are inclined to think that he has still a wary eye to the main chance, and that his eccentric coquettings with

his feeding grounds are, in some degree, at least, dependent upon an abundance or scarcity of food.

Again and again has the sportsman, by chance or the range and instinct of his dog, discovered some choice piece of ground, of no great extent, which the birds, though allowed not a moment's rest, showed the greatest indisposition to leave.

We remember to have found this to be the case many years ago, in a small meadow on Duck Creek, immediately back of what is called Smyrna's Landing. No steamboat had ever entered the creek at this period, and the place was comparatively unknown to shooters.

On the meadow referred to snipe were feeding in such numbers, that had not the dog been a steady old setter, his presence would have been a decided disadvantage. As it was he did not move five yards in advance of us, and we kept on flushing and firing, until, though then an indifferent snipe shot, we had bagged seventy-two birds. When the sun sank upon our sport, the ground was covered with wads as with a slight sprinkling of snow.

The next morning, at the instance of the acquaintance with whom we were sojourning, we shifted the scene by shooting in the stubbles;

and upon visiting the snipe ground on the succeeding day, hardly a solitary individual was to be found.

The signs of the affray were there, but the meadow was deserted except by a few crippled birds. After securing these, all we could do was to sit on a convenient stump and smile at the motions of Dash, who, remembering the first day's shooting, could scarcely convince himself that the game had flown, despite the evidence of his nose.

This flight of snipe were, of course, migrating southward, and having pitched into an isolated spot where food was abundant, were extremely loath to leave it, until their wants were satisfied and their powers recruited for new efforts on the wing.

It is proper to state that the place where the birds were found, was composed of a few acres of bare, black loam and tussocks, flanked on either side by a thick woods.

Snipe are not, moreover, so extremely sensitive to frost as the books would lead the unpractised shooter to suppose. Any person who has hunted these birds for successive seasons, will tell you that he has killed snipe in considerable numbers both in the spring and fall, when the

ice was almost thick enough to bear his tread. We, ourselves, have done this more than once in particular situations, at Pennsgrove and Dennisville, New Jersey. A severe frost, sufficient, so to speak, to seal the marshes hermetically, of course, necessitates them to extend their flight beyond the sphere of its influence, by cutting off their supplies; strong easterly blows, whether wet or dry, drive them sooner to cover;\* rain makes them restless and indisposed to lie to the dogs, and eventually forces them into the withered rushes and cornfields; but if caught by a snow storm on the marshes—as every old sportsman knows is sometimes the case, in spite of what a recent writer calls their meteorological faculties—they seem to lose their natural instinct, and will huddle helplessly under the lee of a hill or bank, in which situations seven and eight have been killed by a farmer's boy at a single shot.

As regards the manner of hunting “gray snipe,” and their sprite-like efforts to escape when flushed, we are no book-makers, and the less we dilate on these subjects the better for all parties concerned.

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\* At Mannahawkin, on the New Jersey coast, Mr. Krider has found them on such occasions harboring in the “cripples.”

If you are naturally a sportsman, you will soon learn how to approach and to kill them, albeit, on the first few trials, the eccentricities which they practice on the wing, and the elfish ease with which they seem to evade the contents of both barrels, will leave an impression on your mind, which, however annoying *then*, becomes a very pleasant and exciting reminiscence after you have learned how to knock them down, right and left, *secundem artem*. In this, gentle reader, consists the gist of the secret of the true sportsman's love for snipe shooting. As to exposure and hard work, no man who has not a quick spirit, sound health, and well-strung muscles, should attempt to hunt snipe.

We have known, too, a life of indolence and a consequent disposition to become stout, to spoil more than one keen snipe shooter. But let a man not too much encumbered with infirmities of the flesh—by which we simply mean fat—carry with him to the marshes a fellow feeling for snipe, in the inverse ratio to their wary and weird-like propensities, and the sport then compares with some other varieties presently to come under notice—as grouse shooting on the Scotch muirs, or deer stalking on the highlands, does with shooting under the escort of a game-keeper in the English preserves.

The remark is equally true of the three exciting diversions, that when one has enjoyed them to perfection, they are apt to give him a distaste for his other previously most cherished pursuits. In fact, we have found the prediction strongly manifested even by uneducated men of ordinary capacities, who have been reared in the vicinity of snipe grounds.

"Hunting quail," said an old resident of the Neck, who had killed great numbers of snipe, partridges and woodcock in his day, "is like killing the stock on a man's farm; but a snipe was made to be sprung and shot as certainly as a trigger was forged to be pulled."\*

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\* This old man has assured us, that he had often seen snipe rise from his meadows in dense flocks, like reed birds, in September, and that previous to the invention of percussion locks, he and his brother had killed a market basket full in a few hours.

He had shot snipe and woodcock in parts of the lower districts, now thickly populated, and lived to see the day when he was forced to complain, that he could hardly find a dozen reed birds in his own fields. Even in his latter days he was a remarkable shot, discharging his piece almost at the instant on which the butt touched his shoulder, and most generally with decided effect.

Though not much given to joocular remarks, he was wont to say, that his dog had such an opinion of his master's shooting, that he barely waited for the report before he sprang forward to retrieve the bird. Old Brazier was perfectly familiar with every rood of meadow or "*mash*" for miles and miles around, and will long be remembered in the Neck, for his skill as a shot and the energetic peculiarities of his disposition.

Of all descriptions of dogs used in field shooting, we unreservedly advance the opinion, that a swift thorough-going pointer or setter is, beyond dispute, the best for snipe.

They know practically little of what they are writing about, who assert, in these latter days, that a slow dog is to be preferred in this species of sport. We grant that the assertion may hold good if intended to be applied to an old man, or a fair-weather sportsman; and in that case we are not surprised, when carrying out the remark, some writers tell you, *sotto voce*, that perhaps you had better leave the dogs at home. We regard their advice, in this particular, pretty much as Dash or Czar would do, themselves, provided that they could comprehend the author were the last, with equal point and propriety, to advise them to beware of hunting too fast, lest they should over-heat their systems or founder their feet—that is to say, with a stare and a sniff. So far from admitting them to be sportsmen, we doubt if ever in their lives they “felt so much cold as over shoes in snow,” and are inclined to conjecture that they must have been the veritable Cockneys, whose dogs, after witnessing a few of their exploits, left them, in unmitigated disgust, and went quietly home to resume their slumbers.



Apropos, we remember to have not long since seen, in our walk, an odd looking disciple of Nimrod, in a velvet cap, shooting-jacket, and horseman's boots, solemnly beating out a building lot on Broad street, where a little water had accumulated after a rain—his face set and his piece at full cock—tramping backwards and forwards, now with the wind at his back, and now quartering—and evincing in these manœuvres a precision and tenacity of purpose, which at first induced us to suspect that the man was mad; until opportunely remembering the advice of these same closet shooters, and having a sincere respect for genius in the germ, we instantly withdrew our too curious gaze, and whistling to Dash, who was also regarding the embryo Nimrod with unaffected astonishment, walked hastily on.

We will hazard the opinion that this disciple, like his master, seldom found dogs of much account in snipe shooting.

But to resume—for the cars have passed the Lazaretto. It is not our wish to sit in judgment between the pointer and the setter, respecting the supposed superiority of either as snipe dogs. We have shot over so many excellent animals of both species, that, falling back on our sporting expe-

rience, it really seems invidious to institute a comparison. If required, however, to pronounce an opinion, we confess a slight preference for the pointer.

Our partiality is grounded solely on his superior steadiness and sagacity in the field, and the faculty which he sometimes displays of winding and leading directly on to snipe, from an astonishing distance.

He is more staunch, and can be more fully depended upon at a much earlier age than the setter. When, however, a dog of the latter stock has arrived at the age of five or six years, and been regularly hunted every season, especially by one man, and that man a sportsman, he sometimes becomes, so to speak, a very Napoleon among snipe dogs.

All the fine qualities of the two stocks are concentrated and perfected in him; but such dogs are extremely rare. They are to be considered as the product of a combination of unusually fine instincts in the brute, brought out, tempered and perfected by the higher intelligence of the man.

If your dog is experienced and staunch to his point, as, of course, he ought to be, the faster he hunts the better your prospect of finding birds. When he gets in among them, he will then become sufficiently steady.

As to his over-running birds, that is mere bagatelle. Snipe have not as yet been arraigned at the "Cedars" for wilfully withholding their scent.

A good dog is still permitted to wind them at a safe distance. Their effluvia is still allowed to be strong, even by those wonder-hunting gentlemen, who, absorbed by one startling idea, like the traveller who saw the calf's tail protruding through a knot-hole in the tan-yard fence, invoke the aid of clap-trap at once, disdaining to pay the least regard to any ordinary solution of the mystery.

If, in the course of a day's sport, a few birds are prematurely and unavoidably flushed, the snipe shooter thinks no more of the matter, than a general, after a successful engagement, does of the casualties of the field.

A disposition to range is characteristic of a high-bred animal; and it is this quality, which, when united to staunchness and a knowledge of ground imbibed from successive seasons of field practice, mainly constitutes a snipe dog.

The antiquated foolery about slow dogs, is only kept up by a set of scribblers, who, while cudgelling their brains to glorify American field sports, ever seem pathetically to lament their ex-

clusion from the English preserves. These gentlemen, having been brought up to a tether, never forget their veneration for game laws and the majesty of a ring fence. Whether they are paid by London gun makers to puff their work on this side of the Atlantic, we know not; but one thing is certain, that if you read what they write, and believe, you will soon profess little faith in aught connected with sporting on this side of the water.

As to their prosy and oft-repeated directions how to hunt snipe, in our humble opinion they are not worth a pinch of powder, except to fill a page or two of twaddle. It would really be something new if any well-tutored dog could be produced, who did not know more about the matter than gentlemen who affect to laud Ponto to the skies in one breath, and tell you that he is not worth the trouble of taking out to the field in the next.

But, allons! The cars have stopped, and as soon as possible we must be afloat. After some delay, a boat and two stout oarsmen were procured; the dogs, inured to all sorts of locomotion, tumbled in and stowed themselves away in the stern-sheets, as peacefully as lambs; and with the tide swelling fast to flood, we pushed off for the opposite shore.

Considerable time was consumed in making a passage, as the river was filled with floating ice, and is here, at least, twice its width at Philadelphia; but thanks to the skill and sinewy arms of the boatmen this was at last effected, without shipping more water than was agreeable, except to the dogs, who, however, bore the infliction with exemplary patience.

Old Pierson, who had been watching the boat with a glass from the balcony, met us on the pier, in spite of his rheumatic limp, and in a few moments we were busily engaged in shifting in our old comfortable room, facing the river.

A lunch was ready for us when we descended in sporting trim; but, although an hour and a half amongst the ice had sharpened our appetites, we paid but brief attention to the repast, and under the auspices of our good-natured host speedily set off, directing our course down to a well-known meadow back of the first cove below the pier.

The day was all we could ask; the sun about midway in his course; the sky blue and clear, with streaks of haze—which foretold a change—slowly spreading in the north-east; but feeling tolerably sure of a half day's sport on the twenty-first day of February, we blessed our auspicious stars and strode rapidly on.

The place for which we were pushing was a low, marshy meadow, partly covered with rushes, and lying in a sort of winding nook between the Salem road and the river bank, outside of which was a tide-water flat, where birds are often found feeding in April on a calm day. The meadow was traversed by a run of some size, and some apprehensions had been expressed by T. of its proving too wet, although Pierson had assured us that the snow had been off the ground so long that it was now in excellent order for snipe. It was easy to see by the state of the ground over which we passed, in making a short cut to avoid a turn in the bank, that the wind and the sun had been unusually active in the process of evaporation, for the season of the year, though we looked in vain for the fishermen from whom our host had derived his information; the sheds behind the bank, where they are almost always to be found mending their gill-nets in the first of the season, being now apparently deserted.

The tide was up over the flat, and as we halted a moment on the bank and looked inland, it was plain that if birds were to be found at all, it was on the meadow before us. After reconnoitering an instant, we crossed the ditch and separated.

A gentle breeze was blowing from the south-

west directly athwart our course, and Dash, our friend's setter, taking it in his nostrils, commenced to quarter his ground at a fast gallop, edging more and more in the wind, while Czar, after casting a jealous glance at the other's motions, drew up in his track and threw his nose high, snuffing the air; then advancing a few yards, he looked around to catch our eye, and led straight at a half crouch, as was his habit when winding on a strong scent.

We had watched his motions from the moment we rose to the bank, and working leisurely up, now felt sure that birds were within a few hundred feet of us, as we could actually see them feeding and flitting up on the meadow.

In this way, taking no notice whatever of a shot from T. at an outlying bird, he continued on towards the bend of the meadow, and crossing the run at the old spot, halted and stood firm to his point on the very edge of the rushes, which covered about two acres of ground.

We waved our hand to T., who was up in a moment, and for a single portentous instant, we both paused, gazing with admiring eyes at the striking picture before us.

The attitude of the dogs, each as he stood like stone, was intensely apprehensive and life-like.

The pointer—as was his wont when close on his game—stood with one foot raised and his body half bent, the loose skin on his forehead corrugated into what we are wont to call an infallible wrinkle, beneath which his large, full eyes were immovably fixed on the rushes before him, with a stare half knostic, half grim, like that of a priest on his tripod about to announce to some trembling expectant the shadows of a predestined doom.

The setter was a few paces behind, equally firm in his posture, though his gaze was more inquisitive and less concentrated, and he held his head higher, as if looking over the pointer's stern. They did not appear to breathe; not a muscle of their bodies moved; the withered herbage rustled softly in the wind, which played with the long winter feathers of the rough dog's coat, but no stone bastion could have been steadier, and the very lines of his jowls were as fixed and determinate, as the circumvallations round the rampart of some bristling fortress.

Simultaneously we made two strides into the low cover; not a feather showed itself; a step farther, and, uttering their peculiar alarm notes, six or seven snipe sprung within as many feet of us, and darted in crooked lines up the meadow;



the reports instantly followed ; the dogs dropped, and in this way, alternately flushing and firing, we beat out the rushes, and drove the remaining birds into the range of meadow below.

Language could scarcely describe the admirable steadiness with which the dogs moved over this first portion of the ground. No two veteran scouts, suspicious of an ambuscade, could have shown greater wariness in the heart of an enemy's country.

They trailed through the rustling rushes as gingerly as if they were treading among circumambient steel-traps.

No new casualty in flushing or falling, no proximity to living or dead birds, could draw them an inch farther than prudence warranted. In one instance, while Czar was on a point, a bird was killed which fell plump on the old fellow's head, without discomposing his equanimity in the least. T. declared that he never winked. A few minutes afterwards, from some peculiar movement of the game, he became wedged, as it were, between two snipe, and we never shall forget the suddenness with which he dropped, the wary, wide-awake look of his red muzzle, as he flattened his jowls down on the moist earth, nor the cool, sagacious air with which he rose on his legs, when

he heard the click of the capped gun-locks, after the birds had been flushed and killed.

We now proceeded to the lower meadows, over which the birds had scattered, and the excellence of the dogs in finding the game, now spread over a wide extent of country, was very apparent.

The superior swiftness of the setter gave him at first some advantage; but after reaching the improved pasture grounds still further down, where the earth was drier, the sagacity which Czar showed in avoiding wide, circling and excursive ranges, and the faculty which he seemed to possess of piloting the shooter directly to the moist spots where the birds lay, gave him in the end full as many points.

Upon comparing notes at sundown we found that, as usual, neither of us could boast of having greatly exceeded the other in the number of shots bagged, which amounted in all to thirty-six brace.\*

The birds were small and thin, but they laid

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\* Early in the spring the birds frequent wet stubble-fields in sheltered situations, a few miles inland from the great water courses, and we have often killed numbers of them in such localities, when very few were to be found upon the meadows. No doubt the worms work nearer to the surface in low, cultivated grounds, than upon the broad, exposed surface of meadow land.

close to the dogs, and flew well, and, every thing considered, we seldom enjoyed greater diversion on many subsequent visits to these and other localities. That night the wind shifted to the eastward, and we reached Philadelphia at one o'clock the next day, in the midst of a furious snow storm. This was the first and last snipe shooting we had in the month of February.\*

Within the last few years these grounds, as well as others above and below, on either side of the Delaware, have been greatly improved. Extensive marshes have been drained; sterile meadows thrown open to the tides and afterwards banked in, so that year after year there is even less certainty than before of finding snipe. Still, diversion is to be had by those who know the grounds and study the weather, along Oldman's, Salem and Alloway's creeks, on the New Jersey side, the marshes of Newport, Staunton, New

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\* We have long noticed that when the nights are cool, with high winds from the north-west, towards the latter end of March, very few birds are to be found on the marshes. The prevalence of southerly winds and a hazy sky, with drizzling rain, is much more favorable to their migration northward. The same remark holds good in reference to the appearance of shad in the Delaware. Indeed, snipe are called shad-birds by many of the fishermen, and the abundance or scarcity of the one is considered highly indicative of that of the other.

Castle, Delaware City, Port Penn, and upon the grounds on Appoquinaminky and Blackbird creeks, on the Delaware side.

It is, however, now more necessary, if possible, than before, that a snipe dog, to be up to his work, should be perfectly steady, and possess at the same time considerable power of range.

While the passion for field sports is largely on the increase with us, agriculturists are improving their lands on the great water courses, and market shooters striving to be in advance of the sportsman on all the choice grounds; so that the chances are, that, unless you go farther and spend more time on your excursions, you will hardly get your share of snipe shooting.

How different was the case in the days of our fathers, and even within the memory of our own! Who then would have thought of going thirty or forty miles from home to kill snipe?

They were then particularly abundant in "the Neck," on the marshes of the Schuylkill, and along all the lesser tributaries of the Delaware.

The shooter was then sure of finding sport on Sheer's or Girard's meadows, in the vicinity of the "Broad Marsh," and almost at any point between the Navy Yard and the Lazaretto, including the drifts and low islands along the Pennsyl-

vania shore. On the New Jersey side, Kaighn's Point meadows, and those upon the Newtown Creek, were accounted good snipe grounds. Redfield's flat, at the mouth of Timber Creek, and low lands of Josiah Ward, lying several miles higher up the stream, were specially famous.

On Eagle Point meadows snipe have been seen in immense flights, and the marshes of Woodbury and Mantua creeks were also celebrated. Wilson's grounds, situated on the latter stream, and consisting of low tussocky pasturage, trodden up by cattle and kept sufficiently moist by the spring rains, were much visited by sportsmen.

Clemmell and Raccoon creeks, and Raccoon island, have also been in great esteem in their day. On the range of meadows from Bridgeport, New Jersey, down to Oldman's Creek, and on all the grounds between Pennsgrove and Salem Creek, birds are still to be found from the twentieth of March until the last of April. We once killed twenty brace of very fine snipe at Pennsgrove as late as the fourth of May, and in March last bagged eighty-eight birds in two days' shooting in the same vicinity. We repeat, however, that these, as well as the most noted grounds on the opposite shore, have been so

drained of late years, that unless you have some acquaintance with the best localities, and are able to stand rough weather,\* hard work, and often chagrin, to boot, you had better extend your excursions.

At Bridgeton, New Jersey, there are an abundance of snipe, both in the spring and fall; you will also have sport at Bombay Hook; but in the neighborhood of Dennisville, New Jersey, are the best and most extensive snipe grounds that we have any knowledge of.

We would advise the young shooter, if he has a week to spare, to go there by all means. If

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\* We were shooting, in March, on the river meadows between Pennsgrove and Craven's Ferry, during a gale from the south-east, when an extraordinary high tide suddenly swept away about fifty feet of the bank, through which the water came roaring in so fast that the dogs were swimming round us, and we were actually up to our waists before we could reach the fast land. The meadows were submerged for miles, and numbers of sheep and hogs drowned, the carcasses of which lay scattered about, while we were killing snipe at low water over portions of the same ground on the next day.

On another occasion, in Robinson's meadows, on Salem Creek, having found birds plentiful but very wild, we at last succeeded in driving them across a ditch into a cat-tail swamp, where we had them at advantage, inasmuch as the cover being high, they were inclined to lie close. In the midst of our sport the tide stole a march upon us, and we were forced to give over shooting and wade the ditch, which we had previously crossed without much difficulty.

the journey is somewhat long and tiresome, he is at least certain, at its end, to find the grounds free from market shooters, who, wherever they go, tend to prejudice the country people against all strangers from the city. These fellows, in general, regard the sportsman with an evil eye, and unless closely watched are apt to play him some trick.

There is a tolerable good house kept by — Wills, at the upper end of the village, and the host is fond of going out with his guests.

The proper times to start are about the middle of March, or the last of October in the fall.

At Frenchtown, Maryland, there are good snipe grounds, but their extent is comparatively small, and the sport is over in a few hours. Still, if you have the advantage of pilotage, and are on the spot early enough in the season—as snipe seldom remain here long in spring, preferring to follow the course of rivers where the tides ebb and flow—you may sometimes have a sufficiency of sport.\*

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\* At this place Mr. Krider has seen five snipe feeding on one spot, within ten feet of the road-side. Had he been disposed, and not too agreeably occupied with watching the ease and dispatch with which they bored the ground with their long bills, the dex-

We have nothing to say here in reference to the kind of gun to be used in snipe shooting ; this is left to the choice of the shooter.

As to the apparel most suitable for traversing the drifts and marshes, it would be well to remember that there is a water-proof boot made by a few Philadelphia artizans, which for lightness and durability exceeds any work of the kind which we have ever used. They should be made large enough to admit two pairs of stockings—one pair made of lamb's wool to be worn next to the skin. You will find the advantage of this, when riding home nine or ten miles, after your day's hunt.

Snipe are found in almost every quarter of the globe. The editor has seen them exposed for sale alive in the market at Canton, China, and killed them in the marshes of the bay of Santa Catherina, on the southern coast of Brazil.

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terity with which they drew out and swallowed the worms, and the quantity which they caught and devoured in the space of a few minutes, he might readily have killed them all at one discharge. They kept so close together, were so busily intent on their operations, that, to an imaginative mind, they might have recalled the fictitious image of so many gnomes in a mine.

After he had observed them for some minutes, they silently flew and alit a few yards farther off, where the inequalities of the surface of the ground effectually hid them from view.



The rice fields of Egypt swarm with them in winter ; they are found in Java and Sumatra, and almost all the islands of the Indian sea.

In Madagascar they are abundant ; also in Ceylon and Japan ; they have been killed in great numbers at the Falkland Islands, and other stormy and desolate solitudes of the southern Atlantic.

They are common in the Arctic regions of Siberia, and in every part of the old continent.

In North America, they are said to be abundant in the golden regions of the Pacific, and are found every where in the United States.

They afford sport to the citizens of New Orleans and Mobile, and are known all along the course of "the great father of waters."

With few exceptions, they breed far to the north, and in Canada, we believe, are only shot in the fall, before they begin to move off to their winter home in the south.

Snipe are often found in very wet situations. We have sometimes flushed them late in the spring from low meadows in the interior of the state, which were so covered with water that the ends of the blades of grass just appeared on the surface.

Notwithstanding their wandering and way-

ward nature, they soon become accustomed to captivity. We once kept one of these birds several weeks in company with a yellow shanked snipe. (*Scolopax Flavipedes.*)

## WOODCOCK SHOOTING.

THE WOODCOCK—SCOLOPAX MINOR.

*Description.*—"The male woodcock is ten inches and a half long, and sixteen inches in extent; bill a brownish flesh color, black towards the tip, the upper mandible ending in a slight knob, that projects about one-tenth of an inch beyond the lower, each grooved, and, in length, somewhat more than two inches and a half; forehead, line over the eyes, and whole lower parts reddish tawny; sides of the neck, inclining to ash; between the eye and bill, a slight streak of dark brown; crown, from the fore part of the eye backwards, black, crossed by three narrow bands of brownish white; cheeks, marked with a bar of black, variegated with light brown; edges of the back, and of the scapulars, pale bluish white; back and scapulars, deep black, each feather tipped or marbled with light brown and bright ferruginous, with numerous fine zig-zag lines of black crossing the lighter part; quills, plain dusky brown; tail, black, each

feather marked along the outer edge with small spots of pale brown, and ending in narrow tips, of a pale drab color above, and silvery white below; lining of the wing, bright rust; legs and feet, a pale reddish flesh color; eye, very full and black, seated high and very far back in the head; weight, five ounces and a half, sometimes six.

“The female is twelve inches long, and eighteen in extent; weighs eight ounces; and differs also in having the bill very near three inches in length; the black on the head is not quite so intense; and the sides under the wings are slightly barred with dusky.”

*The Breeding Grounds.*—You are in the country in the month of March, and chance to be standing on an eminence in front of a low meadow, flanked by a wood.

Although the weather has been mild for the season, yet something in the prospect before you, grounded upon the experience of the past, inclines you to think the winter is not yet over.

The snows no longer whiten the valley; the stream has burst from its icy bounds; but the tyrant king of the north is not yet dethroned, and the face of nature still wears an aspect of austere and desolate gloom. No songster's note

is heard, save the single melancholy call of the blue-bird,\* borne from afar on the rising blast, which, as it rattles the naked boughs overhead, or whirls the dead leaves at your feet, imparts even a touch of menace to the sere look of the scene.

Perhaps while reflecting on the changes of season, you are insensibly led to dwell on a verdure which nought can restore; or it may be you are in that dreamy, short-lived mood which is so apt to enfold a man's inmost spirit as he watches day-light darken in the sky; while the old farmer, whose progenitors, for four generations, have lived and died on the place, halts at your side, internally wondering what it is that you see in the west, where the sun has just sunk in your sight, behind some distant hill.

Suddenly you hear a discordant cry, and observe a bird which has just risen from the low

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\* This call or plaint, which is the bird's common note when migrating in autumn, is also heard early in the spring, when a recurrence of wintry weather drives it back to the south, from whence too early it came.

The note is generally uttered high in the air, and has a very different effect upon the ear from the soft and delicate warble with which every lover of spring is familiar, and which, when heard amid the fragrance of May, would seem the very outpourings of a gratulatory and innocent joy.

grounds before you, rapidly scaling the air by a series of short, spiral evolutions, until it has attained a height equal, perhaps, to that of a tall poplar in the vicinity; then sailing to and fro in a slow, devious circuit, it seems to survey the meadow beneath, while a low, murmuring sound, which has something questful in its cadence, drops, as it were, on your ear from the twilight sky; listening to this, you again hear a sharp, impatient "*pa-a-ck*," and see the bird shoot directly down close to the spot from whence it arose, again uttering its last, harsh, guttural cry as it touches the ground.

This singular flight is repeated twice or thrice, at short intervals, the harsh note on the ground becoming each time more significant and distinct. It is the love-call of the male; the spiral ascent and subsequent motions in the air are the bird's mode of wooing; and you may be sure that the female is coquettishly lurking in the grass close by, or, perhaps, running, with drooping wings, to meet her destined mate as he descends.

"Do you know what bird that is?" your attendant asks, pointing toward the meadow with his unshorn chin.

"Certainly," you reply; "it is a woodcock."

“Nay,” says old Barleycorn, smiling at your fancied ignorance, “it is a *bushschnip*. I haven’t sawn a woodcock on these lands since I were a boy.”

You are only at odds about names, however, the farmer fancying that you spoke of the great pileated woodpecker, once common in the forests of Montgomery, and, with its kingly congener, the ivory-billed, long ago so admirably described by Wilson; while you, perhaps, are almost as far led astray by the quaint but appropriate title, which he bestows upon the bird in question, and by which it was always distinguished in the primitive days of his fathers.

As soon as you are set right again, he will tell you that he has seen as many as five or six woodcocks engaged in these ærial courtships, in the morning and evening twilight, at this season of the year, making a curious medley of sounds which, perhaps, he will describe as a mingled quacking and whooping, loud enough to be distinctly audible on his porch, at least a hundred yards distant from the meadow. On one occasion, while he was standing at the fence, one bird descended so close to another already on the ground, that he saw them engage in a duetto, which lasted for several moments. They

tilted and tugged with their long bills, and flapped each other with their wings, their tail-feathers stiffly erected and their plumage inverted, until the spectator, a conscientious member of a society religiously opposed to all species of combats, save those of flesh and spirit, stepped from his place of concealment and put both belligerents to flight.

A few evenings after this conversation, wearying of your book or your pen, you look out from your window upon the tranquil face of night. It is a calm, clear evening ; you can just hear the roar of the distant dam, and looking toward the quiet meadow, see the run gleaming in the moonlight, with the poplar's tall top, rising straight and still as a steeple's spire, above the dark belt of woods on the back ground.

Beyond that wood is the old Dunker graveyard, where several members of the farmer's family are interred ; you cannot see their tombstones, but you know they are there, shining white and still in the cold moonbeam : you look aloft, where the stars are burning, and, perhaps, some serious misgivings of the lonely life you are leading—some true notion of the vanity of your earthly aims comes over you, as you think of that cluster of graves before those steadfast, far away lights.



At that inexplicable instant, even while your mind is oppressed with its new feeling, the voice of old Barleycorn is heard loudly calling for you to come down. Accordingly, down you go; and before you are up to what he is after, he carries you out on the porch and bids you listen. For a few moments you distinguish nothing but the hoarse bay of some neighbor's farm dog, echoed back by your pointer in the stable, and the subdued, familiar roar of the rushing waters; but old Truepenny, who knows what he is about, lays his hand on your arm, and then, for the first time in your life, you hear those mysterious and much-disputed notes, which Nuttall and one or two others have described so well.

Your hat and storm-jacket are on, and the old man, omnipresent, leads you down to the low grounds, where, careless of agues, he hides you under an alder bush, and both remain quiet as death.

Presently the woodcock's loud quack strikes your ear, apparently within a few yards; the farmer points in the air; you catch a fleeting glimpse of the bird as he mounts, and at the same moment hear a low, hurried, quavering hum, which seems like an imperfect attempt at

the preluding of a song; this dies away in the air over head, and in an instant after is succeeded by a loud, distinct melody, so earnestly emitted, and of such rapid continuance, as to resemble the musical gushing of water, or the reedy notes of a sylvan pipe, in which some wayward urchin is blowing. It is, however, the strains from a feathered songster's throat, and becomes more clear and sweet the lower it hovers in the air around; until ceasing abruptly it is followed by the usual "*pa-a-ck*," uttered in a much lower key than before, and with a half choking but curious emphasis, as if addressed in appeal to some object near.

If you choose to remain at your post for an hour or more, you may hear the serenade continued in this way with but little remission, and even see the bird on the ground within a few feet of you, its tail-feathers erected, and body stiffly set on its legs, as with a ludicrous and inimitable appearance of conceit it jerks out the strange finale to its song.

The old man assures you, on returning to the house, that the hen is close by, and that the evening performance, which appears so unique and interesting to you, is literally an old song with him.

A week or two later in the season, you chance to be crossing the fields, on your way to the village post-office, perhaps, with some four-footed companion of your sports composedly coursing your heels. You are passing along the skirt of a wood; it is a balmy April day; the wind is fresh from the south, and you seem to scent the odor of early violets afar off, as cloud after cloud flits through the blue air: you hear the short familiar notes of the song-sparrow, earliest and sweetest warbler of his tribe, and instead of feeling poetically inclined, ten chances to one that you are thinking on another visit to the snipe grounds. If so, mechanically turning your head, you glance back at your familiar, and lo! as if living in your very thoughts, your familiar is "at a stand."

There is a knostic yet half quizzical look involved in the wrinkles in the old Trojan's portentous face, which makes you think that he has a tom-cat or a stray fowl skulking in the bush; and feeling a slight flutter of expectancy yourself, bending low, you peer curiously about, until suddenly, as by a flash, your gaze is arrested at once, and little fairy, fairy bubbles float up, as it were, from your heart to your eyes, as amid the thin, dry herbage at the roots of a

bush, or a decayed stump, you see, within reach of your hand, the woodcock brooding on her nest.

By Jove! here is a discovery. You almost feel as if you had stumbled upon one of nature's inscrutable secrets.

The old pointer is as steady as a statue; the wild bird seems wonderfully tame; there is no need to speak or to stir; you may sit and gaze your fill on that solitary spot.

What a rare and exquisite proof of the triumph of maternal instinct is here!

How innocently calm—how replete with patient tranquillity, the large black eyes meet your eager gaze—how quiet the wild thing sits, every dusky brown quill and marbled feather in its place, and the long, grooved bill resting on the breast!

So full of abiding trust is the creature's cradled look, that, lost in admiration at her apparent unconcern, you scarcely think of the eggs concealed in the nest beneath. It is as if she had assumed that artless, unshrinking air on purpose to beguile you of the treasures, which, day and night, she so sedulously guards. You may even put forth your hand and touch her wing, and she will not shrink; but if by any

species of subtlety you could place your finger on the breast where the plumage is worn from the skin, you might then feel a mother's heart beating hurriedly within, in spite of the seat maintained, the tranquil eyes, the composed and unruffled plumes.\*

So unstudied is the nest, composed as it is of a dozen stalks of grass and a few withered leaves, so fearless and full of faith to the end the attitude of the bird, that it is long before you can withdraw your eyes from the sight.

From how many hundred leagues in the far south has the woodcock flown, to hatch her brood at last in that chosen spot! For how many days and nights by that old grey stump—in sun, in wind and in rain—through how many dangers past—has she kept her post! How often has that little heart throbbed with fear as the hawk stole by on her hungry flight, or the stealthy fox on his midnight prow! How often have the winds beat and the floods came, and the house built by the stump withstood the

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\* We attempted to remove the eggs from under a sitting woodcock, when, uttering a sort of soft murmur, she fluttered off to a little distance, and remained watching our motions with evident anxiety. We replaced them and turned away; she then returned to the nest, and soon after hatched her brood.

shock! And who so sure of his own sympathies, as to make mock of the instinct, which, until the end is wrought, mysteriously binds the wing that has flown so far, to this charmed atom of ground.

Now, call off your dog and go your way, humbled like a child before the smallest mystery of creation, yet devising, as you distinctively glance at the trees, what should be done with the market shooter, who, for the sake of the extra shilling which game brings out of season, would kill this bird on her nest.

Whether the female solely performs the duties of incubation, or is assisted by the male, is not for you to determine. Come to the spot at any hour of the day which you please—sit there from sunrise until dark, you will always find the same bird on the nest, and while you are on the watch she will not stir. It is true the markings of both sexes are the same, with a very trifling difference, and both birds have the same peculiar and somewhat *bizarre* look, imparted by the long bill, the large and singularly shaped skull, and the brilliant black eyes set high and far back in the head. Nevertheless, you may readily distinguish the sex by the greater size of the bird before you, the superior length of the

bill, as well as the black tint on the back being less intense.

But although you have not been able to detect this fact, and cannot give a decided opinion, yet reasoning from analogy, and from the circumstance of the male bird having been seen in close proximity, it is fair to infer that while the hen is abroad in search of food, more especially at night, her partner takes her place.

There is good reason to suppose, however, that her absence is but short, barely long enough to satisfy the cravings of nature, and that she is by far the greater portion of the time on the nest.

A little later in the season you are walking in the same woods. In a mossy and moist spot, shaded by the boughs of some gigantic tree, a bird suddenly flutters up and falls within a few feet to the right or left of your path. It is your woodcock; but never heed her now; be not duped by her innocent stratagems; bid Ponto come to a "down charge;" step carefully over the ground in every direction but that in which the pretended cripple would lead you: sharpen your eyes until you seem to see like a fly: aha! you have them now; the rogues have chipped the shell; one, two, three; and see, covered like

the rest, with a brownish white down of the same hue as the withered leaf on which it skulks, see here is the fourth. If you lift them gently in your hand, listen to their feeble "*peep ! peep !*" touch their tender bills, and watch how shrewdly each tiny urchin toddles off to hide behind the tendrils of a surface root, or an empty tortoise shell, you might almost take them for the children of the fabled Mossmen.

And yet so helpless do they seem in that solitary range of forest, that it appears almost a miracle they do not fall a prey to the snake, the raccoon, the opossum, and other voracious prowlers of the night. But though feeble, they grow fast, and the same maternal care which kept its vigil so long on the nest, is now equally provident to supply and preserve the callow brood.

A month later you are abroad again ; Ponto is inclined to range out, and you to permit him ; at length, after a little preliminary scouting, he either draws up at the side of a rivulet, or, perhaps, as if struck by a sudden reminiscence, goes straight up to the foot of the great tree on the same sombre spot, where the earth beneath the dead leaves is still wet, although the ponds and marshy nooks of the wood are beginning to



dry. As you approach, up spring the same brood, now well feathered and strong, and darting among the trees, pitch severally behind a bush, run a few yards farther and skulk.

The *two* old birds are frequently found in company, and here the whole family remain until the increasing drought of summer drives them down to the shores of our large rivers, and the "cripple shooting," as it is not inappropriately called, begins.

When Frank Forrester, who sometimes belies his *nom de plume*, tells you that the woodcock regularly rears two broods in a season, he speaks knowingly that which he knows not of.

We have lived for years in a part of the state of Pennsylvania, where cocks have bred within the memory of man, and we have paid great attention to their habits, which are sufficiently curious and interesting, albeit involved in such obscurity that it behooves him who speaks of them to weigh his words. In common with others who have observed them as closely as their retiring nature would permit, we are inclined to the opinion that their nests are seldom seen in Pennsylvania before the fourth of April; the period of incubation is universally admitted to be twenty-one days, which, allowing a month for the growth

of the young birds, will bring them far into May before they are fully fledged.

It is true that nests have been found in March, and it is said even in February ; but these cases, like the late broods in June, are merely exceptions to the general law, and are dependent upon accidental circumstances.

The idea of the hen turning over the tender brood to the care of the male, while she proceeds to incubate a second time, is not susceptible of proof, is opposed to the belief of the best ornithologists of the country, and even to the known instinct of the bird. In our opinion, it is one of those strokes of the pen intended to startle by its boldness, when the author is really as much in the dark on the subject as his readers.

In the forests of Montgomery, Berks and Northampton counties, we have repeatedly found them feeding in detached broods—two, three or four young birds, fully fledged, in company with the two old ones—near the last of May, and in the months of June and July, if the season be wet. When you first approach these insulated, marshy spots, the birds lie close, and if you are so disposed, as the woods are pretty open and free from brush, you may easily make a double shot when they spring. After that it is useless to mark down

the remaining birds, as they seldom admit the dog to point them a second time while under the influence of their first fears.

Pass on until you come to another piece of wet ground, when ten chances to one your dog points again, and another brood springs. It is absurd for writers to tell you that young cocks in July are only half-fledged, and may be knocked down with a pole. When flushed on the breeding ground, their first flight, though seldom protracted beyond one hundred yards, is sufficiently agile and vigorous to puzzle aught but a good shot to bring both birds down; indeed, we have known a young cock, refusing to lie a second time to the dog, to fly entirely through a piece of wood containing many acres, and take refuge at last in the middle of a rye-field.

Indeed, if for the purpose of observation and inquiry, you traverse the woods at this period, you will be fully satisfied of the power of their flight, by watching the rapid and dexterous manner in which they dart among the surrounding tree trunks, very different from the lazy, listless way in which the old birds flap over a meadow in the glare of day.

In making these remarks we would by no means be understood to countenance cock shooting at this season of the year.

When thus harassed, the birds leave the woods and seek other quarters in the succeeding spring. They formerly bred abundantly in Haycock township, Bucks county; but some foolish fellow from Bethlehem, having laid a wager that he could kill a hundred birds in a day, in accomplishing this murderous feat, made cocks extremely scarce in this district for several successive seasons. We were told by an innkeeper on the old Bethlehem road, that he saw this man count out ninety-six woodcock on his bar-room floor.

That they are much more abundantly diffused over the country, than their peculiar habits lead the inhabitants to suppose, there is no manner of doubt. Mr. Krider remembers well an old farmer residing near Moorestown, New Jersey, who, accidentally flushing cocks in his woods, procured a quantity of powder and shot, and being somewhat conversant in the art of pulling a trigger, in one day killed an almost incredible number, which he carried to the Philadelphia market, to the great astonishment of the hucksters.

The birds were in the habit of breeding in the same woods, and the old fellow, well satisfied with his day's work, has been on the lookout for the long bills ever since; and it concerns us to state, to but little purpose.

In the summer of 1844, while visiting the breeding grounds, in company with a young friend, he unfortunately shot a hen-bird, while engaged in performing those little interesting manœuvres by which she hoped to decoy our steps from the vicinity of her unfledged young. The brood, consisting of four half-grown birds, were preserved and carried to the farm-house, where two of them were accidentally killed the same night. A box was procured, the bottom strewn with soft earth and dead leaves, strips nailed across to prevent the birds from escaping, and the next morning they were placed in their new abode. Being very wild and their bills tender, great care was required in feeding them, and it was necessary to cover the slats to prevent them from injuring themselves by fluttering up against the top of the box. The mode of forcing them to feed which we at first adopted, was to take them out of the box, open the bill and place the worm athwart, when, after a few ineffectual attempts, the birds took them down.

This plan succeeded well for a few days, when, to our surprise and gratification, one bird readily took his food from our fingers, and soon became so tame as to require no further handling. The other fellow continued as wild as before, and after

giving us a great deal of trouble, when nearly full-grown accidentally received a tap on the head with a finger, which, to our unfeigned regret, killed it on the spot.

We have no objections to state, notwithstanding the sympathy of Dr. Lewis for young cocks, that, ogre-like, we did eat this bird without any remorse of conscience, and found it very tender and juicy.

The other bird did not appear to miss his wild brother; perhaps, like bipeds without feathers, he consoled his grief with the substantial reflection that he would now have the box and all the larvæ to himself. But this is scandal, for instead of becoming proud and politic, he grew more gentle and tame from day to day, and the reader has no idea as he increased in grace how he gained upon our affection. In truth, to speak without quirk or quibble, we fairly loved that woodcock. We had cause. He was certainly feeding on those unpoetical gournaments, who were ultimately destined to revel upon us, and he did this three times a day, in such an easy, *recherche* way, that we had no words to express our gratitude. The thing was too exquisite. It was really like carrying the war into the grim enemy's country. We kept him amply supplied and he

fed equally well, when sharp set, at any period of the twenty-four hours.

Often when engaged in reading or writing at night, in our little apartment, we have paused to listen as we heard him moving about in his still, prying way, turning over the dead leaves and probing the crannies of the box in pursuit of his prey. When the bars were removed, he sometimes flew out, and after making a survey of the room—to ascertain, as we supposed, if a pet spaniel was present—invariably took a position close to our feet, which he was fond of playfully striking at with his long bill. This was slightly bent and protuberant at the middle of the upper mandible, giving him a strange and somewhat grotesque appearance.

We have often watched this bird attentively, when he was engaged in feeding from surfaces of different depths and consistency, which had been purposely presented to him, after he was full grown. When his food was merely thrown out of a cup in the usual way, if not very hungry, he would stand steadfastly eyeing the coiling, twisting mass, waiting patiently until some of its component parts had disengaged themselves, and crawled under the dead leaves or into the angles or edges of the box; then slowly in-

serting the end of his bill into their hiding places, he drew them out one by one, and, lifting them gently up, swept them into his gullet by a simple motion of the head and neck, and an almost imperceptible movement of the tongue. If his appetite was keen, however, he did not stand to parley, but attacked the mass pell-mell, striking and devouring each worm singly with astonishing ease and despatch, until his wants were satisfied or not a single individual remained.

Before he was fully feathered the worms could easily be observed twisting in his crop, as he sat dozing at his ease, like an alderman after his dinner. No doubt some of our delicate readers will regard this as rather an indifferent subject of remark; but we assure them, without intending in the least to crack jokes, that the sight was nuts to us, and we were at a loss to invent means to glorify that woodcock.

The snake-bird—*Plotus Melanogaster*—which does not even eat snakes, by the way, and the secretary bird, which does—were mere gobbling creatures of instinct compared with him. He went to his feasts as scientifically and with as much gusto as Lucullus himself. It really seemed as if his whole tribe had owed the worms of the earth an irreconcilable grudge since the days of



Adam. If so, they had no time to cry *peccavi* ; they did not even wriggle at his bill's point ; but almost seemed to glide voluntarily down his throat, so quickly and evenly did they disappear. Beholding this, we gave free vent to our glee, and remembering a line of Lord Byron's, which disagreeably intimates that man's body was made "to clog the soul and feast the worm," we at once came to the sage conclusion that a woodcock was made for exactly an inverse purpose ; and not being able to compete with his lordship's all-engrossing verse, we contented ourselves with granting our bird full supplies, besides decreeing him "the garland of the war." And to say the truth, he deserved it. He would empty a pint cup of the small reptiles in twenty-four hours ; and as for trying his ingenuity by hiding them three or four inches deep in the soft, moist earth, why a covey of birds feeding in the stubbles, with the scent blowing freely from their feathers, had about as much chance of escaping from your pointer's nose, as the enemy from his infallible bill.

But how did he proceed to effect this, you ask ; what was his system of tactics ? My dear reader, compose yourself and listen.

When placed upon ground thus prepared, if

his fast had been purposely protracted, he would first industriously dibble the earth with his bill, striking it rapidly a dozen times or more into the cover, after the manner of a snipe ; then seating himself on his breast, or more frequently standing in the middle of the box, he turned his large full eyes intently on the holes thus bored, in a very singular and knowing way. The first time which we saw him in this attitude, we felt assured of what was to follow, and that he was instinctively acquainted with the habits of his prey. Presently, after the lapse of a moment or two, you observe his neck feathers slightly ruffle, and that instant, with the quickness of thought, he half turned his head, struck and devoured a worm. In this manner he continued to feed, occasionally shifting his ground a few steps and boring afresh, until the whole space was thoroughly riddled and not a single worm left.

We have observed him thus employed for more than half an hour at a time, and have no doubt that he was materially assisted in his operations by the movements of the worms, which evidently worked up towards the holes bored in the soil. Whether he was guided by the sense of smell or not, we are not prepared to say. In fact, some experiments which were made at the time in re-

ference to this point, inclined us to think that this sense was obtuse in our bird.

Mr. Bowles, an English traveller, who, many years since, had the pleasure of observing woodcock feed in an aviary, supposed that they discovered their prey by this faculty alone, because he noticed that in boring they never struck their bill into the earth further than the orifice of the nostrils. The inference, however, is fallible, for the reason that birds breathe chiefly through their spiracles, and are very sensitive to the introduction of any thing but air into them, as you may easily satisfy yourself by noticing pigeons and fowls when they drink, or feed upon soft food.

The circumstance that the woodcock, as he expresses it, "never missed its aim," is more conclusive. Microscopic dissection has revealed the fact, that the bill of the bird in question is supplied with a branch of the cranical nerves, the minute filaments of which are distributed to the knob at the end of the upper mandible, as in the case of the snipe—*scolopax Wilsonii*—the tip of whose bill after death becomes finely pitted or dimpled, though in life it is very smooth; the sense of hearing in birds is supposed to be much more delicate than that of smell; the sight is the

most acute of all the other faculties; and in the case of the woodcock, as before remarked, the eyes are unusually large and full, and set high in the skull to enlarge the field of vision by the reception of the faintest ray of light which may enter the dark coverts in which they feed; so that if we suppose that our woodcock, while standing in his striking attitude over the holes he had bored when the worms were buried beyond his reach, was actually scenting their peculiar odor, listening to their movements in the earth—like the woodpecker to those of the insects which his death-taps on the surface have started from the interior of the hollow limb—and watching for them to crawl up in his sight or within the length of his bill, we then have a combination of four faculties admirably adapted to the support of this bird in its wild state, when, from its powers of digestion and the nature of its prey, it is known to require a prodigious quantity of food.

Woodcock have been killed at all hours of the day, and yet those who have examined their alimentary parts will tell you that they rarely found a worm even in their crops, and never in their stomachs; hence the old and prevalent idea that they abstracted the substance of the worm by

suction. By some men of no erudition yet of ordinary intelligence, this absurdity is still believed.

However, without wishing to detract in the least from the merits of Mr. Bowles' observations, we will now relate the course of our experiments, leaving the reader to judge of the result.

We took our bird from its place of confinement at its usual feeding time, and buried in each corner of the box two large earth-worms, an inch and a half deep in the soft, black loam; he was then immediately replaced, and at once began to bore eagerly in the middle of the box, where, for the purpose of observation, his food was usually placed; it was not until he had explored that spot thoroughly that he changed his ground, and at last discovered and drew out the objects concealed. We continued the experiment until he fell into the habit of first searching the corners of the box; we then hid a dozen worms the same depth, in the same kind of soil, but in the old spot; the result was the same. He first went to one corner of the box, and being disappointed there, bored in another, and finally returned to his usual place. We intended to have carried our experiments farther, but being

obliged to go to the city, our stay was prolonged for a fortnight, and upon our return, we found the bird had died from neglect, or, as the farmer's boys in whose care it was left, pertinaciously asserted, from the effects of a surfeit.

Woodcock often return for successive seasons to the same spots to rear their young. This fact was long ago satisfactorily proved in England, and in Pennsylvania nests have been found for two springs in succession, beneath the same bush, on a piece of slightly elevated ground sheltered from the west winds by a woods. We have not the least doubt of the identity of the inhabitant; in fact, this peculiarity is remarked in many other migratory birds of a more familiar nature. Wilson, the father of American ornithology, whose acuteness of observation was only equalled by his regard for truth and his unobtrusive modesty, repeatedly refers to it as not the least interesting among the habits of the creatures he was called upon describe.

The woodcock has been known to exhibit, under certain circumstances, curious symptoms of anger, somewhat similar to the pompous struttings of the turkey. On the twenty-fifth of August Mr. Krider was shooting in the mountains of Bedford county, Pennsylvania, birds being

then numerous in this section of the country, when a cock suddenly flew up and alit within a few feet of the nose of his dog. It ran slowly before the animal, dropping its wings, spreading its tail, ruffling its plumage, and manifesting every sign of impotent rage. Mr. Krider was so surprised at these manœuvres, never having seen any thing of the kind in the woodcock before, that when it sprung at last he missed it with both barrels, and at the report of his piece, eight or nine birds rose close to him, in a small, swampy thicket where he started the first bird. From the fact of this bird being of unusual size, he was of opinion that it was a female.

Mr. William McGuigan also shot a bird in the state of New Jersey, under similar circumstances. We saw this specimen in the Chinese Museum, prepared in that gentleman's inimitable way, exactly in the position in which it was killed, and from a casual inspection of it, believe it to be a female bird. A sporting acquaintance of ours, while "cripple shooting," saw a bird, which the dogs had flushed in the covert where several cocks had already been started and killed, alight on the bank, and perform the same eccentric movements within a few feet of him.

In the summer of 1846, while we were con-

versing with a farmer who was engaged in harrowing corn, a cock suddenly flew out of a woods and alit in a furrow close to the horses, who were standing still at the moment. The bird did not appear to notice us, but drooping its wings and inverting its feathers, stuck its bill in the ground several times as in the act of boring; before we had an opportunity of noticing it further, the rattling of the gears, caused by a movement of one of the horses, startled it, and with a shrill cry it flew back to the woods. Some rain had fallen the night previous, and the soil was wet to the depth of an inch or more; the corn was still short, and from our position on the fence we could distinctly see the bird. Whether our presence had any thing to do with its actions we cannot say; possibly, if it had remained a few moments something might have followed to elucidate the mystery.\*

Woodcock shooting in the immediate vicinity of Philadelphia, like snipe shooting, has declined within a few years and from similar causes, but not to the same extent. Great numbers of birds are still shot in the months of June and July

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\* Woodcocks are sometimes seen boring into decayed stumps for wood-worms. We once saw a bird thus engaged in the crotch of a dead willow tree.



along the banks of the Delaware, by those who pursue this sport for pleasure or profit. It is quite a frequent occurrence in favorable seasons, for two or three good shots to kill from twenty to thirty cocks before nine o'clock in the morning, between the navy-yard and the mouth of the Schuylkill, a distance of five miles. In fact, to enjoy this kind of shooting at all, you must be up and off long before sunrise, so as to be on the ground and have your sport over before the heat of the day. If the weather has been dry for some time previous, you may be certain of finding birds in "the cripples," that is, if your purpose has not been forestalled by some detachment of bank-shooters, who would appear to have slept on their arms under the trees in some adjoining meadow, so as to commence the action as soon as it is light enough to shoot. The vociferous clamor and continued firing of the sharp-shooters, when birds are abundant, furnish no bad representation of a skirmish in the gray of dawn, while their flushed faces and constant dodging up and down the bank (often loading as they run) to keep pace with the yells of their canine assistants and the shouts of their companions in the covert, in no wise detract from the merits of the scene. It is customary for them to

go in parties of four, two of whom enter "the cripple" with three or four setter dogs, while one of the others remains on the bank, and the other takes his place on the "drift" on the outside of the cripple nearest the river.

Spaniels, by the way, are held in little esteem for this arduous sport, and they who use them select a stock much stronger and hardier than the little English cocker, which is worse than useless. The last soon fag in the heavy, encumbered ground, and after a little experience in what they are expected to do, learn to skulk, or to answer their excited master's "hie on!" with shrill, helpless cries of concern, as if to intimate that they are sorry for it, but really the thing will not do. Setters, being better able to stand the work, on the contrary, take so kindly to it, that they often give tongue on every bird, and acquire a habit of flushing game, which, of course, destroys their utility as field dogs. It is seldom that even the best bred setter, if encouraged, season after season, to range and hunt out a cripple, can be depended on out of it; instances are, however, known, where dogs have seemed to comprehend exactly what was required of them, when hunting the same description of bird in different kinds of ground; and we have heard of setters,

and more especially pointers, who, in the language of the doggerel,

Would flush a woodcock in a swamp,  
And stand it in the clear.

But these instances are rare, and if you have any regard for the standing of your dog, do not suffer him to enter a cripple.

However, the bank-shooters are at their stations; the dogs dash in, and presently you hear a yell, followed by a shot, or a shout of "mark! bird up!" from within, and a report or two from the bank, or the outside, according to the direction which the bird takes. You may readily imagine what ensues, when you are told that every step in the dark cover is in deep, black mire, strewn with decaying drift-wood, and overgrown with stunted trees, reeds and thick alder bushes, and when the birds are put up rapidly, the alarm-notes, firing, and yells of men and dogs increase in proportion, while the affrighted objects of pursuit, driven from every covert by the dogs, dart up and down the cripple, to fall victims at last to the unerring aim of the marksmen. When the latter are up to their business, few, indeed, escape, although it must be said that, if the woodcock is naturally a stupid bird, as some people assert, cripple shooting is a rare

mode of quickening his torpid faculties. Under the spur of its application he sometimes betakes him to the wiles of his cousin, the snipe, turning and twisting on the wing so as to elude the shooter's aim—darting and flitting low round the trees and bushes, so as to disappoint his most sanguine calculations—now springing, with a shrill cry, at his very feet, and now stealing away silently, at his back, until the man grows bewildered in spite of himself, his dog loses heart, and the bird by sheer dint of its ingenuity escapes from them both. It is ludicrous, in this case, to observe the manner in which either manifest their chagrin. The shooter besmirched, perhaps, from top to toe, his face begrimmed with powder and his eyes blinded with sweat, mutters his disappointment in “curses not loud but deep,” while Dash, in as sorry a plight, looks wearily up in his vexed face, with a despondent wag of his tail, as if, though loath to admit the fact, he needs must own that that cock was too much for him, too. This is the kind of shooting against which many sportsmen, with some appearance of pique and more of justice, yearly exclaim. Should the weather continue dry, it lasts from early in June until the birds leave the cripples to moult, in the month of August.

Some of the old haunts for cock along the Delaware, were very famous in our young days. The drifts or higher portions of the flats, where the refuse of the tides had collected, were sure spots, especially those where the fishermen resorted to dig up worms. On the Cakehouse drift fourteen or fifteen birds have been killed in one morning. Hay Creek cripple was considered well worth hunting out, and at the name of Whitehall many an old cock shooter will start as at the sound of a trumpet. This was situated on Hollander's Creek, and was esteemed the best place within ten miles around. The drift at the head of Broad Marsh, below the Point House, and all the drifts and cripples along the river and the creeks running into it, were, and are at the present day, excellent places for cocks in dry weather. But if rain falls in any considerable quantity, the birds then leave these places and disperse over the meadows. Strange as it may sound to the sportsman, many persons who shoot are utterly ignorant of this fact. Mr. Krider was once invited by a friend to shoot cocks in the neighborhood of Wilmington, Delaware; the season had been dry, and many birds had been killed in the cripples; but a heavy shower of rain having wet the meadows and corn-fields, the party hunted in

the usual places in vain, to the great annoyance of —, who, having found them abundant for several successive days previous, could in no wise account for the sudden disappearance.

“Where do you shoot snipe?” inquired Krider, after the other had completely exhausted himself and his patience in his fruitless endeavors to show sport.

“In yonder meadow,” answered —; “but you will find none there at this season.”

“Let us try, nevertheless,” said Krider.

After much persuasion he consented to lead the way, and in this meadow they killed twenty-seven cocks, to the great delight and surprise of —, who was now extremely anxious to visit all such golden spots within the compass of a day's hunt. The party brought in forty-five birds at night-fall, every one of which was killed in the meadows.

On another occasion, in the year eighteen hundred and forty-one, Mr. Krider, in company with a friend, killed sixty-three birds in a range of meadows and a maple swamp near Hightstown, New Jersey, by ten o'clock in the morning, returning to Philadelphia the same day. The ground at this place has been so much improved since his visit that few birds are to be found there at the present day.

At most of the places mentioned in the article on snipe shooting, cocks are abundant in July if the grounds be sufficiently wet; but at Port Penn, Delaware, some distance in the rear of Price's hotel, there is a maple swamp, surrounded by very thick tussock meadows, which was and, perhaps, is still very excellent ground. On one occasion, three shooters killed ninety-three birds before mid-day among the tussocks and in the swamp. We have at times found them abundant in the mountainous parts of the state in August, September, October; and on the tenth of November, when partridge shooting, in Lehigh county, we killed in the woods seventeen of the finest birds which we ever saw bagged. It is worthy of remark that, in the fall of 1845, we shot two woodcock in a meadow, where a few moments afterwards, the dogs pointed snipe. This occurred in Montgomery county, on a small branch of the Perkiomen Creek, watering a valley a short distance from the little village of Salfordville. While killing a few partridges for the table, we unexpectedly started three cocks from among some scattered bushes which bordered a small run. Upon examining these, it was discovered that they had not yet done moulting. A few hundred yards further, six or seven snipe were

sprung exactly in the place where we expected to find them, and while charging, a young dog in company, escaping our notice for a moment, ran out and stood in a piece of sedgy ground, partially covered with rank grass and rushes. On our approach he was staunchly backed by the old dog, and two more cocks sprung. The last proved to be in the same condition as the others; but though we beat this meadow carefully and several others in the course of the afternoon, we saw no more birds, nor have we ever found them since in a meadow at this season of the year.

When hunting ruffed grouse in October, among the stony hills of Montgomery and Berks, we have sometimes killed cocks in small spots of black marshy ground in the very midst of the huge gray rocks, from some one of which a spring issued. During the heat of summer we have found them in dense, dry thickets and copses not far from the feeding ground, and when driven out into the glare of day they almost invariably pitch close to a fence, or a tree, as if blinded by the light. There is a small species of hawk which builds its nest in a retired part of the woods, and is a great enemy to these birds on the breeding ground. We have never been



able to shoot or trap it. It has a shrill scream; is between the size of a sparrow-hawk and the *falco columbarius*, and is exceedingly watchful and wary. It often visits the orchard and the vicinity of the barn-yard early in the morning to carry off young chickens. We have several times seen it swoop down from the topmost branch of a tree and seize a woodcock, and have spent hours in the woods on foot and on horseback following its cry in vain endeavor to shoot it, or to discover its nest. A son of the farmer informed us that he had twice found the latter near the top of very tall trees; in each case the young birds had flown, and the bottom of the nest was covered with the bones and other remains of various small birds. Its cry is heard in the deepest part of the woods, at all hours of the day; its tail is barred with white; but whether it is the *falco velox* of Wilson or no, we are unable to say.

We certainly never felt inclined to doubt the accuracy of Audubon's remark that the woodcock never feeds on salt marshes, until last summer, when we were requested by one of a party of four at supper, to taste a portion of a bird, which we did in turn, and all agreed that it was decidedly sedgy. This bird was one of eighteen which had been killed in a meadow below

Pennsgrove, on the previous day, by two of the party present. They were served up with their heads on, so that no deception could have been practiced had the circumstances warranted such a suspicion. Brewer has remarked that a person, technically ignorant of ornithology, would at once pick out a woodcock from a snipe, from something peculiar in its appearance. Besides the "plumed tibid, the tarvi are much shorter, and shows that the bird is not intended to wade, or to frequent very marshy situations, like the snipe. The plumage of the former is also of a more sombre shade."

When found in a meadow they are much more easily killed than snipe, and with steady dogs very few ought to escape. This bird, like the snipe, has a remarkably game look; some sportsmen before consigning them to the bag, display as much fondness over them as the two executioners so admirably described in Quintin Durward, were wont to do over their victims, with this difference, that the latter spoke to living and the former to dead ears.

## THE RICE-BUNTING, OR REED-BIRD.

EMBERIZA ORYZIVORA.

*Description.*—“The rice-bunting is seven and a half inches long, and eleven and a half in extent. His spring dress is as follows: Upper part of the head, wings, tail, and sides of the neck, and whole lower parts black; the feathers frequently skirted with brownish yellow, as he passes into the colors of the female; back of the head, a cream color; back, black, seamed with brownish yellow; scapulars pure white; rump and tail coverts the same; lower part of the back, bluish white; tail, formed like those of the woodpecker genus, and often used in the same manner, being thrown in to support it while ascending the stalks of the reed; this habit of throwing in the tail it retains even in the cage; legs, a brownish flesh color; hind heel, very long; bill, a bluish horn color; eye, hazel. In the month of June this plumage gradually changes to a brownish yellow, like that of the female, which has the back streaked with brownish black;

whole lower parts, dull yellow; bill, reddish flesh color; legs and eyes as in the male. The young birds retain the dress of the female until the early part of the succeeding spring; the plumage of the female undergoes no material change of color."

We have nothing new to say of this well-known and delicious bird. It visits this part of the state early in May, when the song of the males is heard in every meadow.

Such was the impression made upon us, last spring, by the sweet, tinkling notes which proceeded from a large flock perched on a willow tree, that although in search of specimens at the moment, we took the gun from our shoulder and forbore to shoot. The actions of the male while singing reminded us somewhat of those of the canary. The notes are tiny and delicate, like those of a small musical-box, but extremely rapid, short and varied, and very expressive of an ethereal lightness of spirit. If the listener closes his eyes for a moment, he might almost imagine the presence of some fairy beings, carolling in the air to the praise of the new-born May. In an instant, however, the concert ceases, and, opening your eyes, perhaps you see the whole flock in the act of alighting on the ground.

In a few moments they fly to the tree again, or upon a rail fence, when the song is resumed with the same sweet and surprising effect.

They remain but a week or two, and then pass to the northward and eastward to prepare their nests. When the hen is sitting, the notes of the male are emitted in the air near the nest, and have been pronounced to be in reality more pleasing than those of the European sky-lark. They have no song in the fall, merely uttering their usual *chink*, with which almost every one living in the vicinity of the city is familiar.

We killed numbers of these birds in September last, in the corn-fields of Montgomery, and found many of them in very good order. The same season, partridges being very scarce, we shot many of the *alauda magna*, or common meadow-lark, which were unusually abundant, and in better order than we remember to have ever found them before. The young birds were, in fact, hardly inferior to the partridge, and we continued to supply our table with them until the severe weather set in, when the flocks disappeared. The shore or winter-lark was also more common than usual in this section of the country. They fly in flocks of from twenty to a hundred, and have a shrill, pitiful note, some-

what similar to that of the killdeer plover, but much less loud and distinct. They are as large and quite as plump as the reed-bird in September, and make a very agreeable variety for the table. On a twenty acre rye-field, which had been strewn with manure during the winter, we killed sixty-three of these birds in the month of January. Before the flock rises they sometimes make a low, curring noise, and after having been shot at, circle swiftly round the field several times before they alight again. It is seldom, however, that the shooter can knock down more than two or three at a shot, as they fly loosely, and never huddle together on the ground, except when sunning themselves at noon. In a state of captivity they are very wild and restless, and we have never been able to preserve them for any length of time.

Large flocks of the little *fringilla linaria*, or lesser red-poll, appeared in the fields during the past winter. We shot great numbers of them feeding in the stubbles, especially before a storm; and, as far as our experience goes, they are all marked at this season with the crimson patch on the crown. In a few, the color of the patch was less decided than in others; but out of hundreds which we examined, not a single

individual was found entirely destitute of it. The rudiments of the red patch on the breast and rump can always be distinguished on the young males in their winter dress. In some of the adults it is of a rose color, and in others of a blood-red. On some occasions we found the flocks dispersed in the woods, gleaning from the twigs of the tallest trees, and again observed them in the low meadows, where they are fond of dabbling in the runs on a warm day. Their appearance, however, was always uncertain, and after being shot at several times, the flocks often disappeared for a time from the vicinity. They thrive in confinement, and have a peculiar chirrup, very different from their usual call, which resembles that of the yellow-bird (*fringilla tristis*) and of the canary. We sent a female redpoll, which had been slightly injured on the wing, to a lady in Philadelphia, where we saw it in perfect health, some weeks afterwards, in a cage with some canaries.

## THE GRASS PLOVER.

BARTRAM'S SANDPIPER—FRINGA BARTRAMIA.

*Description.*—"The grass plover is twelve inches long, and twenty-one in extent; the bill is an inch and a half long, slightly bent downwards, and wrinkled at the base, the upper mandible black on its ridge, the lower, as well as the edge of the upper, of a fine yellow; front, stripe over the eye, neck and breast, pale ferruginous, marked with small streaks of black, which, on the lower part of the breast, assume the form of arrow-heads; crown, black, the plumage slightly skirted with whitish; chin, orbit of the eye, whole belly and vent, pure white; hind head and neck above ferruginous, minutely streaked with black; back and scapulars, black, the former slightly skirted with ferruginous, the latter with white; tertials, black, bordered with white; primaries, plain black; shaft of the exterior quill, snowy, its inner vane elegantly pectinated with white; secondaries pale brown, spotted on their outer vanes with black, and tipped with



white; greater coverts, dusky, edged with pale ferruginous, and spotted with black; lesser coverts, pale ferruginous, each feather broadly bordered with white, within which is a concentric semi-circle of black; rump and tail coverts, deep brown black, slightly bordered with white; tail, tapering, of a pale brown orange color, beautifully spotted with black, the middle feathers centred with dusky; legs, yellow, tinged with green, the outer toe joined to the middle by a membrane; lining of the wings, elegantly barred with black and white; iris of the eye, dark or blue-back, very large. The male and female are nearly alike. Weight upwards of three-quarters of a pound."

This plump and finely marked bird appears in the fields of Montgomery county, Pennsylvania, about the middle of April, and sometimes earlier. They are then in good order, not at all shy at first, but after having been shot at, become extremely vigilant and difficult to approach. For several weeks they frequent the grass fields in companies of never more than three or four, and early in May separate into pairs. We have flushed the hen from her eggs, deposited in a grass field, without any appearance of a nest, on the tenth of May. In the

spring and during the summer, they have a peculiar, prolonged scream, which they emit in the air, on the ground, or from a fence-rail, on which last they frequently alight, stretching their slender and elegantly formed necks, and opening and spreading their wings. At this season of the year their sharp, rolling whistle is comparatively seldom heard. They run and fly well, but their suspicious manner of lifting their heads readily betrays them on the ground, while their strange cry often leads the shooter to the field which they inhabit. Mr. Jacob Beck, an old sportsman, who had killed many of these birds in the month of September, was totally unacquainted with their common note on the breeding ground, and would not believe them to be the same birds, until he had examined several specimens, shot in the fields of Montgomery, in the neighborhood of Perkiomen Creek. They feed principally upon grass-hoppers and other insects. We once killed a bird early in the summer which had two large gooseberries in its crop. In this part of the country they are called *regan-fegles*, or rain-birds, from the supposition that their scream is ominous of wet weather. They will not lie to the dogs, and must be killed by stratagem. In August they begin to leave

the uplands with their young, though occasionally a bird or two may be found in an old stubble or clover-field in a remote part of the farm, as late as the middle of September. They are then excessively fat and very delicate eating. The market shooters kill many of them in August and September, on the meadows bordering upon the river Delaware below the city, resorting to many stratagems to cover their approach, such as wading ditches, or secreting themselves behind cattle and fences, while their companions steal on the birds on their hands and knees. Unlike the golden plover, or bull-head of the river shooters, this species is never found frequenting ponds, or the banks of ditches, and is never seen in large flocks in the upland country, unless driven inland by storms.

The grass plover migrates in small bodies, and almost every one has heard its whistle sounding over the city, apparently from among the stars, on a calm summer night. Both varieties sometimes sweep over the lower meadows in a long extended line, flying low and with great swiftness. The grass plover is far superior in flavor to all the other varieties, the golden plover perhaps, excepted, and is much sought after by epicures.

We believe this bird is not found in Great Britain or upon the continent, the gray plover of Ireland, which bears some resemblance to it, being essentially different in its markings and habits. It is said to be common in some parts of the vast prairies of Missouri, but we are inclined to think, is nowhere very abundant.

The kildeer plover has been with us all winter. We found them in companies of ten or twelve feeding in the rye-fields and low meadows after a thaw. They were very fat and excellent eating.

## THE BULL-HEADED OR GOLDEN PLOVER.

CHARADRIUS PLUVIALIS.

*Description.*—“The golden plover is ten inches and a half long, and twenty-one inches in extent; bill, short, of a dusky slate color; eye, very large, blue black; nostrils, placed in a deep furrow, and half covered with a prominent membrane; whole upper parts, black, thickly marked with roundish spots of various tints of a golden yellow; wing coverts, and hinder parts of the neck, pale brown, the latter streaked with yellowish; front, broad line over the eye, chin and sides, of the same yellowish white, streaked with small, pointed spots of brown olive; breast, gray, with olive and white; sides, under the wings, marked thickly with tranverse bars of pale olive; belly and vent, white; wing-quills, black, the middle shafts marked with white; greater coverts black, tipped with white; tail, rounded, black, barred with triangular spots of golden yellow; legs, dark dusky slate; feet, three-toed, with generally the

slight rudiments of a heel, the outer toe connected, as far as the first joint, with the middle one.

“The male and female differ very little in color.”

This is also a handsomely marked and delicate bird for the table. It is, however, never seen far inland in the United States, but chiefly frequents the sea-coast, and the flat shores of such large rivers as flow uninterruptedly into the ocean. It is very common in the northern parts of Europe, where it breeds on high and heathy mountains. In North America it is supposed to rear its young in the remote, Artic regions, where the ground is more open and solitary, and less covered with forests. Small flocks have, occasionally, been seen for a day or two in Montgomery county, whither they have been driven by the September gales.

They are killed in September and October along the Delaware and its tributaries, and under the skilful guidance of Westley Stintzman, the renowned paddler, we have sometimes surprised and effected considerable execution among flocks seated on the edges of ditches and ponds on the meadows near the mouth of the Schuylkill. The mode of approaching them is

by silently paddling up the ditches and creeks in a small, railing skiff when the tide is at its height. This is done to the best advantage after an overflow of the meadows. Like the grass plover, it is said to lay four eggs of a pale, olive color, variegated with blackish spots. We were informed by a man who has killed great numbers of these birds for the market, that they sometimes become so sedgy as seriously to affect their sale. He attributed this to some change in the character of the marshes in the neighborhood of Salem, Alloway's, and other creeks, where he was in the habit of shooting.

## RAIL SHOOTING.

RAIL—RALLUS CAROLINUS—COMMON SORA RAIL, OR, LITTLE AMERICAN WATER HEN.

*Description.*—"The rail is nine inches long, and fourteen in extent; bill, yellow, blackish towards the point; lores, front, crown, chin, and stripe down the throat, black; line over the eye, cheeks and breast, fine light ash; sides of the crown, neck, and upper parts generally, olive brown, streaked with black, and also with long lines of pure white, the feathers being centred with black on an olive ground, and edged with white; these touches of white are shorter near the shoulder of the wing, lengthening as they descend; wing plain olive brown; tertials, streaked with black, and long lines of white; tail, pointed, dusky olive brown, centred with black, the four middle feathers bordered for half their length with lines of white; lower part of the breast marked with semi-circular lines of white, on a light ash ground; belly, white; sides, under the wings, deep olive, barred with black, white, and



reddish buff; vent, brownish buff; legs, feet, and naked part of the thighs, yellowish green; exterior edge of the wing, white; eyes, reddish hazel.

“The females, and young of the first season, have the throat white, the breast pale brown, and little or no black on the head. The males may always be distinguished by their ashy blue breasts and black throats.”

During the summer months, the flat shores of the Delaware, in winter so bleak and devoid of interest, present to the stranger's gaze a spectacle of unwonted beauty. Standing upon the long embankment which keeps off the tides from the range of meadows behind him, he sees a vast, waving belt or border of bright, luxuriant green, extending from the base of the bank to the low-water mark, and stretching along the course of the river, in rich, dense array, as far as the eye can reach. When the tall reeds which compose this magnificent fringe, have attained their full height, their vivid verdure and slender feathery tops, over and among which countless flocks of birds are continually rising and settling, impart an almost oriental character to these alluvial marshes. The effect is heightened by the compactness with which the wild plants grow, the

stifling heat which is endured among them on an August or September noon, and the various descriptions of animal life, with which, at this season of the year, the miniature forest abounds.

The waters alternately leave the flats bare, and cover them to the depth of four or five feet; the reeds rise from the ooze by erect stems, stout and strong below, and tapering away to their tops which bend and bow with every passing breeze: upon the upper branches of these paniced tops, the nutritious seeds which are the bread of the wild birds of the air, are produced; yellow blossoms adorn the lower ones; long, sword-like leaves flaunt from the stems, and drooping towards the water in the sultry silence of noon, seem, at every cool splash, to woo the embraces of the flood, or by their wild wavings and rustlings in the wind, when the tide is down, contribute not a little to the poetry of the scene. The reeds also grow abundantly upon the shore of all the tributaries of the Delaware, upon its bars and low, marshy islands, and along the ditches which intersect the meadows by the river-side. Cattle are fond of them, and may be daily seen straggling across the bank, and wading upon the edge of the flats, to browse upon them on the flood. Many varieties of winged

insects sport among the leaves of the reeds; minks and musk-rats prowl among the interlacing roots at low water; the large, golden-eyed frog and the snapper crawl upon the ooze; fish swarm among the stalks on the flood; the solitary bittern roosts all day upon the higher portions of the flat; the marsh-wren binds its curious nest to the stalks, far above the dash of the stormiest tides; the restless swallow darts to and fro in pursuit of gnats and flies, or pauses to perch on the fragile sprays of the panicle, which its weight bows in the gale; woodcock and snipe are found in "the cripples" and upon "the drifts;" red-winged black-birds, rice-buntings, teal, mallard and other marsh ducks, feed upon the farinaceous seeds; and here, above all, millions of the Carolina rail, or little American water hen, for several weeks find a rich repast, on their annual migration to the south.

The mystery which once hung over the migratory movements of the whole genus, to which the bird under consideration belongs, has long been dispelled by the researches of the ornithologist, and now only exists in the minds of those who, from want of inclination or capacity, are cut off from the use of books.

Like Wilson's snipe, a few of these birds breed in the Middle States. Few persons, indeed, have been fortunate enough to see the nest of the Carolina rail. Mr. Krider, who for several years has paid considerable attention to the study of ornithology, has, however, he thinks, discovered it more than once, built in a bunch of coarse grass on the edge of the high marshes. In looking over his rough notes, we find that in the year eighteen hundred and forty-five, he found a nest on the Broad Marsh with the hen sitting upon it, cunningly concealed from view by the top of a tuft of grass, which was bent down and fastened to the nest. She left her eggs with evident reluctance, stealing away as it were, step by step, and constantly looking back to watch the intruder's intentions. We, ourselves, remember to have seen, some years ago, at the house of a medical gentleman of Montgomery county, Pennsylvania, a prepared specimen of the *Rallus Carolinus*, with her brood beside her, which the doctor assured us had been caught in his meadow on the previous June. We have also killed rail in the same month on a farm a few miles distant from the former place. It is well known, however, that the main body move on far to the north, return-

ing with their young late in the summer, when on a calm, clear night, their cry may be distinctly heard in the air, as they pass over the city to the marshes. Dennis Welsh, who for many years has occupied the situation of a watchman in one of the lower districts, and is well known to the sporting world as the oldest and perhaps the best pusher on the river, has informed us that, year after year, he has never failed to distinguish their voices sounding over his head, while he was silently traversing his beat at the dead hour of night. As these little visitors have long been a source of pleasure and profit to Dennis, who still prides himself on never having missed a tide, when there was water enough on the marsh to work his batteau, there is something curious in the idea of the veteran pusher mutely listening, night after night, on his rounds for the decisive evidences of their arrival, as if while fulfilling his functions as guardian of the public rest, he was also, in some sense, acting as watchman to his own private interests in the fields of air. Others, while fishing for eels at night on the outer edge of the flats, have repeatedly been startled by hearing rail alight singly in the water close to them, and instantly swim in among the reeds.

Remaining with us several weeks, and affording much sport at a season of the year when there is little else to shoot, they then depart for the south even more suddenly than they came, and the pushing-pole and the rail-box is laid by until the succeeding year.

Their course through the Southern States may be traced in the same manner as their advance to the north in the spring, their appearance in the different degrees of latitude occurring at regular intervals, from Hudson's bay to the shores of the great gulf. The idea is even entertained that they extend their flight to the south, beyond the limits of the continent. In regard to their apparent feebleness of wing, it has been long observed, that although from the development of their legs and feet, and the peculiar compressed shape of their bodies, it is evident that they are especially formed for running in thick coverts, they have nevertheless been observed during the morning and evening twilight, and in rough, windy weather, to fly entirely clear of cover with great freedom and swiftness. Hardly an old rail shooter but has seen them occasionally cross wide streams like the Delaware, when hard pushed by the boats. Late in the season, when the finer variety of the reed

has been entirely beaten down by storms, we have flushed rail which have flown away from the skiff in zig-zag lines, like snipe. When the reeds are in this condition, the birds may be readily seen running and feeding on either side of the boat, or arranging their plumage as quietly as pigeons on a roof. We have often watched their motions for ten minutes at a time, to the great discontent of the pusher, who, like the rest of his class, devoutly believed in the proverb, that "a bird in the boat was worth two in the reeds." On one occasion we saw a gun which had been inadvertently loaded with powder and wad only, discharged at a rail engaged in pluming itself; the bird did not even discontinue the business of the toilet, and was killed by the second barrel without moving from its position.

In regard to the rail's being occasionally subject to epileptic fits, superinduced by paroxysms of rage or fear, no satisfactory case of the kind has ever come under the immediate notice of the author or his editor. We were, however, shown a bird during the past season, which was said to have been shot at and apparently killed, but afterwards revived and was found to be wholly uninjured. It lived in good health for several weeks. One of the persons in the boat which

picked up this bird, was an old friend of the editor's, and we are inclined to place implicit faith in his report. Dennis Welsh before noticed, also remembers two or three cases of the same nature in the course of thirty years' experience in rail shooting. In one instance, the first bird which he flushed on the tide, fell dead at the simple report of the cap, the gun missing fire, which incident so affected the shooter, that, after examining the bird, he directed Dennis to put back for the ferry, declaring that he would shoot no more. There was a high tide rising on the marshes, and Welsh, who always enters deeply into the sport, ventured to expostulate; the gentleman, however, was firm in his determination never to kill another rail, and after deliberately destroying his box with a large stone, called for his carriage and departed.

"From what I could hear," said the pusher, "I believe he has never been out since." Another sage old pusher and duck paddler, who had also seen rail "play the 'possum," or kick the bucket outright in this mysterious way, gravely advanced the opinion, that although these birds had not been touched by the charges aimed at their bodies, they had nevertheless died, indirectly, from the effects of lead in the



system, having been previously afflicted with a species of disorder, which the learned faculty call *colica pictonum*, produced by indulging in morbid appetite for the pellets of shot, which are so thickly strewn on the marshes. This, the pusher thought, so debilitated their constitutions, that the mere report of villainous saltpetre, so annoying to Hotspur's human popinjay, was too much for them.

"The wital forces," said he, "couldn't stand it no how; hence they eyther tuk fits straight, or else straightened out in arnest."

That shot are occasionally found in the digestive organs of water-fowl, is a fact known to many sportsmen; it is true, also, that paralysis sometimes supercedes lead colic; these two facts being undisputed, we leave old E.'s theory to the attention of the curious without further comment. There is really nothing extraordinary in the idea, that intense apprehension should produce insensibility and even death, in a creature of such delicate organization as a rail, and we are strongly inclined to think that Mr. Orde—for whom we have great respect as the friend and companion of Wilson—mistook this feeling in the cases which he adduced, for that of rage. We have also full faith in the state-

ment of our friend, and in the experience of Dennis Welsh. As for the other man's theory, that carries conviction off its feet; that speaks for itself.

The rail is said to be a ventriloquist; very respectable authority is also adduced for that assertion, and, with a simple qualification, we are disposed to believe it is a fact.

The lordly lion of the desert—the banded fox of “the land of ice and snow”—the katydids which sing so merrily in the forest; the little cricket which chirps away at home in the porch, but cunningly creeps in towards the hearth when the nights grow chill—each and all possess, in some degree, the power of deceiving the ear. We have shown in a former page how a dog became a somnambulist, and are now ready to endorse the assertion, that the whole family of the rails are—*travelling* ventriloquists. One thing is certain, if they are capable of counterfeiting death so cleverly, and of throwing their voices into any corner they please, they are accomplished birds, and it will not do to stigmatise them “ninnyhammers” and “simpletons” any longer; we must hasten to amend that. There is more point, as well as magnanimity, in bestowing upon them the

familiar and somewhat endearing epithets of "timid little water-fowl," "shy birds," as we shall see when we get further on, when rail are found baffling the bewildered pusher, by hiding under the submerged reeds, to escape being riddled by a charge of No. 8, or diving like the devil or a bay black-head, to avoid being knocked on the head.

It would be well, also, to remember that two different branches of the family have been raised to royal dignity; the *rallus elegans* being styled the king-rail in America, while the *rallus crex*, by the unanimous voice of the people of Old England, savants excepted, was long ago crowned king of the *tetrao coturnix*, the wandering and warlike quail.

Rail often leave the marshes and come upon the dry meadows, seldom remaining there longer than an hour or two, and never wandering far from their favorite haunts. While crossing a hard, dry meadow, from one marsh to another, on the island of Spesutia, in October last, we came upon numbers of rail which refused to lie for the dogs, but rose from among the thin grass and flew swiftly off to the rushes, about two hundred yards distant. When shot in the above situations, their crops have invariably

been found to contain minute fragments of stone.

The disposition of the rail is strongly marked by petulance and curiosity. Although by no means manifesting the restless and spirit-like energy which distinguishes the snipe, they are far from being the stupid birds which it has pleased some writers, in their infinite wisdom, to represent them. Like woodcock, they often display ingenuity enough to baffle the sportsman, and were it not for the advantage of the tides, we should have little or no diversion to boast of in rail shooting. They are so incessantly harassed during their stay among us, and keep so closely to their coverts at low-water, that it is almost impossible to acquire any intimate acquaintance with their habits. From what has been observed of their domestic relations, we have no doubt that in their reedy homes, in warmer climes afar, they are sociable and frolicsome birds.

When a person, totally unacquainted with the habits of rail, is brought in a light skiff to the very edge of the marshes, and informed that myriads of the interesting birds which have so long attracted the attention of the sportsman and the naturalist, are at that moment sleeping, feed-

ing, pluming, warring, idling or making love in the reeds before him, seeing nothing of these, and hearing only the *chuck* of the black-bird, and musical *chink* of the rice-bunting, he naturally asks for ocular proofs of the assertion, unwilling to believe,

“Without the sensible and true avouch  
Of his own eyes.”

Ridiculing the idea of his inability to put them up, if there, perhaps he demands to be landed forthwith, and, gun in hand, eagerly pushes his way among the reeds, while his more experienced companion, chuckling to himself, quietly lies on his oars to await his return. The first soon loses his way in the dense, sultry covert, and after some shouting and calling, at last makes his appearance again in a very sorry plight, covered with marsh-mud, out of breath, and more disposed than ever to adhere to his heresy; declaring that while the reeds seemed to be alive with other birds, he had been unable, after the sharpest scrutiny, to discover even the tail-feather of a single rail. Something he did see once running swiftly between the reeds; but it vanished too quickly for him to say whether it was a bird, or a water-rat. After enjoying the joke, his friend rows the skiff up one

of the guts of the marsh, and concealing it among the reeds, directs the other to draw and reduce his charges. This being done, after bidding him fix his eyes on a particular spot where the tide is leaving the mud bare, he knocks quickly with his brass rowlocks on the gunwale of the boat. A sharp, peculiar cry, caught up and repeated from a hundred throats, is immediately heard, a remarkably neat, trim looking bird in a sort of quaker motley, suddenly runs out upon the mud, jutting up its tail and erecting its head with a curious air, as if to inquire what is wanted;—the gun is levelled—the trigger touched, and the stranger has “mudded” his first rail. He springs up in his ambush in hot haste to secure the prize, but his companion, repeating his commands to keep quiet, knocks again. The small hubbub, consisting of many and rapid reiterations of the monosyllable *crek*, again arises; a second bird appears on the same spot, and immediately shares the fate of the first.

“Now,” says the operator, who it appears from the pole projecting over the stern and the square tin box, carefully stowed away in the bow, is to initiate his friend still deeper in the mysteries of rail shooting, before the day is spent, “now re-load, and when another bird

comes out, do not shoot at him at first sight, reserve your fire for a moment."

"And wherefore?"

"You will see," is the reply.

The experiment is now repeated with similar results, except that when the third rail appears, after looking inquisitively round, it stoops to examine its prostrate companions, and with that strange misapprehension of death so often manifested by the brute creation, begins to make war upon the inanimate bodies, striking with bill and heels after the manner of a game-cock. Perhaps two or three come out upon the mud at the same moment; one struts around the dead birds; another offers amatory caresses; or all join in a sort of mimic battle royal, like so many pullets in a barn-yard. They may be all killed at a single discharge, but if unmolested the contest is speedily ended by one of the party whimsically running back to cover in a circuit, when the rest immediately follow.

As the tide continues to recede, the rail follow for the purpose of gleaning up the seeds and small insects which are left behind, and many birds are killed, in the way described, by persons who station their boats in the guts, just after high water. At low water not a single rail

is to be seen ; but when the next tide is risen sufficiently for the boats to get upon the flats, then commences a scene of life and emulation—of incessant loading and firing—of rapid gliding hither and thither among the reeds, which, if ten or fifteen parties are engaged on the same marshes, requires to be seen, to be fully understood. Let us suppose that the tide, which is rising fast, with a stiff breeze from the south-east, is as favorable as could be wished, and that the moment has arrived when the pushers, laying aside their oars, prepare for business, while the sportsmen opening their rail-boxes and charging their guns, station themselves in a standing position to shoot. The post of the pusher is in the stern ; that of the shooter a little abaft the bow. Each pusher is stripped to his shirt and pantaloons, and holds in his sinewy hands a pine pole fifteen feet long, and weighing about four pounds. It is his arduous task to flush and retrieve the game ; the sportsman has nothing to do but to load and shoot. A square tin box, made as small as is convenient, and containing in its several apartmentsammunition, percussion caps and wadding, lies at the feet of the last. These boxes are now both neatly and strongly made ; that sold by Mr. Krider during the past season was



by far the best pattern of the kind we have seen. Many rail shooters prefer using shot cartridges on account of the fraction of time saved in loading; others—and we are of the same opinion, ourselves—suppose that they can kill more birds on a tide with loose shot, and a few, it is said, have been hair-brained enough to shoot shot cartridges, made small for the bore of the gun, with the charge of powder filled in. These are set up in the box before them, the end of the powder charge being left open, and they drop them down the barrels, assisting their descent by a stroke of the butt on the footboard of the boat, when the gun becomes foul: the use of a loading-rod is thus dispensed with altogether, and an additional fraction of time saved, which, as they assert, always tells when rail are thick on a fly on a full tide. Many wild stories are afloat respecting the wonderful facilities for rapid execution afforded by these cartridges; but as neither the editor nor the author have been tempted to try them, we, of course, cannot vouch for their truth. We still adhere to our loading-rods, which are made several inches longer than the barrels to admit the full grasp of the hand, and sufficiently stout to be driven home at a single effort. A common ram-rod is inadmissible into

this kind of shooting, in which dexterity and despatch in loading are necessary to the full enjoyment of the sport.

As the different boats enter the reeds at various favorable points, we will first notice that fat, angry looking gentleman in the blue skiff, with the one-eyed, quizzical genius at the stern. The fat gentleman is a tyro, as clumsy as a cow in the boat, and a very indifferent shot. He is moreover exceedingly irascible and seems to suffer much in his unusual position, while the blinking scamp behind him is as cool as a snow-ball. There has already been some sparring between them respecting the 'price of the tide, and the pusher, who is not without his slice of humor, has made up his mind to victimize his quondam employer. This is easy enough when one is in his element, and the other out of it, and woe to that fat gentleman who has been tempted, in an evil hour, to leave trade and come out for sport; for the other, incensed at his attempt to jew him down, is determined to make sport of *him*.

The skiff glides smoothly in among the reeds, the pusher on the *qui vive* for mischief, while the shooter maintaining his equilibrium as well as he can, commends himself to his dignity and keeps a sharp look out.

“Now,” says the roguish pusher, gently lifting and inserting his pole into the mud as the skiff shoots into a thick growth of reeds, “Now, sir, left leg forward—right leg behind—stand steady—shoot quick—load fast, and leave the rest to me. Mark!”

“Bang! bang!”

A very palpable miss each time, and the bird which has risen directly in front within a few feet of the boat, flutters slowly over the tops of the reeds, with its legs hanging loosely down, and almost instantly drops out of sight again, while the unfortunate marksman, thrown violently from his centre of gravity by a sudden treacherous movement of the skiff, stumbles forward over his rail box, and catching at the gunwale, pitches head foremost, gun and all, over the bow.

“Why bless my soul!” exclaims the villainous author of the catastrophe, with a great show of surprise, “I never seed the likes. Did you do that on purpose, sir? You’re the very quickest gentleman out of a boat, I ever pushed. You hit that rail too: I seed him drop his legs.”

“Go to the devil!” exclaims the fat gentleman, wiping his face and clambering back into the boat in high wrath.

"Load up, sir, load up," answers the fellow coolly; "there is no time to tell fortunes now. Look, sir, yonder comes Dennis Welsh and Bill Starn pushing side by side."

"D——n Bill Starn!" mutters the other, wiping off his gunlocks with a white handkerchief.

"It's no use, sir, a breakwater wouldn't stop the nigger. See how he ploughs through the reeds like a steamboat. Ready, sir?"

"No, I ain't, you one-eyed scoundrel," growls the tyro, fumbling at the lids of his box which have been jammed into the partition by his fall.

"Well, sir, no hurry; its my place to wait upon you; if you've no pertikler rejection, I'll tell you a story as how I lost my eye while you're cleaning off the mash mud."

"You're an impudent son of a ——," exclaims the exasperated shooter, entirely losing sight of his breeding.

"Pshaw, sir," replies the fellow, leaning on his pole as coolly as before, "it's despurit hard work for two dogs in one collar to pull different ways. Besides the story'll make you laugh in spite of yourself, and you'll be sartin to kill the next bird. Once upon a time——"

"I tell you what," interrupts the fat gentle-

man, with savage deliberation, "if you tell that story, I'll see you hanged before I pay you a copper, sport or no sport."

"Sir," says the pusher in turn, "I hope you won't be offended, but I must tell you this much of it—I wore my eye out as the cat did her's, watching the mice."

"Now," retorts the other, who has at length managed to re-charge his piece, "now mind you, fellow, if you give me—"

"Hush!" exclaims the pusher, pointing and staring in his energetic way at some object on his right hand; "shoot, sir, shoot."

The fat gentleman starts, and catching a glimpse of something swimming among the reeds, levels his gun and fires both barrels.

"Hurrah!" shouts the pusher, frantically beating himself to his pole, "you've pinked him—you've settled his hash—you've mortalized yourself on this mash."

"What is it?" demands the shooter in a state of great excitement.

"What is it!" repeats the pusher, with a glorious assumption of scorn, as he brings the stern of the skiff to the spot, and carefully lifts up the object by the tail; "you isn't much larned in Natarel Histery, is you, sir?"

"Why, no, not particularly," answers the worthy cit, flushing still more.

"I thought not," says the pusher, shaking his head and blinking awfully at the animal in his hand, "well then, sir, I has to inform you that you has done what no other man has parformed in this here river for fifty years—you has killed a young otter."

"No!" exclaims the other, staring hard in his turn at the rogue's face, who stands the inquiring gaze like a monument.

"Fact, sir, and now whether you pays me for this here tide's shove or no, you're sartin to figure in the Daily Ledger, the Sun, and all the weeklies, not to speak of the New York Spurrit."

"But is this really an otter, my good fellow?" says the shooter.

"Sartainly it be; I seed many a one in the far west." (The mendacious rascal had probably never been west of the Schuylkill in his life.) "Has you any acquaintance among the hornology chaps, sir?" Does you know any of the great skin-stuffers?"

"Why, no, I can't say that I do," answered the fat gentleman, regaining his complacency fast.

"It'll cost you ten dollars, at least, treating the house, when we come in; but in course you won't mind that," says the pusher.

"The devil!" exclaims the shooter.

"I'll go a quart of Davy Hunter's best on it, myself. Lay it up in the bow, sir, where it'll have a chance to dry. If old Mr. Peale were alive now, he'd ring down dollars for that ere spissimin."

"I'll tell you what, my man," says the gentleman, "d——n the birds! I dare say that I shouldn't kill many—just put me quietly ashore at the ferry, and say nothing of this to no one; I'll pay you your charge, but, mind ye, do you keep mum until I'm on my way to the city."

"But they'll never believe me, sir; they'se a mighty suspicious set at that 'ere ferry: they'll swear I'm a bigger liar than Tom Pepper," says the pusher.

"But you forget the papers," says the fat gentleman, chuckling.

"Right, sir, my name is Shoemaker; I should like to go in with you, if you've no express rejection. I'm not 'zactly a candydate for fame, but seeing my name in print, may put an extra job in my way."

“ We’ll see—we’ll see,” says the gentleman briskly ; “ put her head about.”

The pusher obeys with seeming reluctance, and upon arriving at the ferry, receives his hire and a shilling extra to treat himself, while the fat gentleman, completely hocus-pocussed, wraps the *minc* carefully up in his handkerchief, and calling for his carriage, hurries away with his prize.

Let us now return to the marsh; observe that tall, athletic negro who is pushing the gentleman in the green skiff; see how he plies his pole like a plaything, forcing the boat ahead with a velocity which bears down every thing before him, while so artistically is she worked, that when a bird rises her motion is as steady as that of a swimming swan. His white competitor in the batteau is our old acquaintance Dennis Welsh; mark how easily and smoothly he makes his way among the reeds, his man standing steadily as a statue. It is evident from the style which these two boats are propelled, and in which the shooters knock down the game, that the men are all crack hands at the sport. There is a marked difference, however, in the modes of pushing. The black, Bill Starn, as he is called, careers over the marsh, like a wild horse on a



prairie, putting up birds on all sides and keeping his man busy, while Dennis, who is at home on every foot of the flat, glides along steadily and evenly, flushing a bird at every boat's length, as he edges gradually in towards the bank with the rise of the tide. At one time four birds are on a fly for each boat, nearly at the same moment; two are shot from the batteau, which, according to agreement, carries but one gun, and three from the skiff, which is privileged to use two. These birds fall among the thickest of the reeds, but being fairly hit they are all found. Bill shows his teeth and rolls his eyes among the reeds like a wild beast; he sees like a hawk and moves like the wind. He boats his dead birds, is off again, and has two more down in a moment. One of these, however, is crippled and although the wild pusher strikes directly at it, the bird evades the blow by disappearing under water, while Bill, with a wild, African shout, thrashing the reeds with his pole, continues his career. Dennis follows more slowly, but as the wind continues to rise with the tide, it is to be seen that he keeps his man on a steadier level, partly owing to the flat bottom of the batteau, and partly to his long experience in pushing. He flushes bird after bird as he advances, his

man shooting the instant the gun touches his shoulder, and invariably riddling his bird. At length while the skiff is still traversing the high reeds, the batteau enters a space of about a half an acre, covered with a species of water-weed bearing a profusion of yellow flowers. There is just water enough upon it to float the batteau easily, so well has the pusher hit his time. The boat first takes the edges of the space in a wide, circling sweep. Not a bird rises. "Bad show, Dennis," says the sportsman. But Dennis knows better, and still continuing his course but contracting its circle, the rail at last begin to show themselves. Three are killed successively, and two more the instant after. "Let them lie," says the old stager, waxing warm and plying his pole like lightening; "kill them dead, sir, and they won't move." The game now rise so fast from among these yellow flowers, that the shooter's dexterity in loading comes first into play, and, it must be acknowledged, he shows himself an adept. Sixteen birds are down at one time, and being killed according to the pusher's instructions, he does not lose a feather. In this comparatively small space of the marsh, thirty-six birds are boated, not a rail being missed, or pinioned, or escaping Welsh's sharp eyes after being knocked down.

In the mean time the skiff is nearly lost sight of among at least a dozen others, which, from the rapid and continued firing, appeared to be having good sport. It is to be noticed, however, that Bill's man begins to shoot with less certainty than before, and that the second gun is less frequently brought into requisition. The rail also seem to display more life upon the wing; they fly swifter and further. The wind has increased to a half a gale, and a portion of the rest of the shooters are observed to be making bad work.

"The tide will be up to the top of the bank, sir," says Bill, "but the daylight will hardly last it out."

"Aye," answers the shooter, "we must get further in: the water is driving the birds towards the meadows."

At this moment a report like that of a six pounder is heard among the boats, followed by a dense cloud of smoke. Some shooter has blown up his rail box. On goes Bill without giving the accident a second thought; but the indefatigable Dennis is there before him, and now commences a trial of sportsmanship between the two boats, which is exciting enough when viewed from the bank. They are pushing side and side

within fifty yards of each other, flushing and dropping their game in a style not to be excelled. Bill manages his boat beautifully under the circumstances, and his man shoots now remarkably well. But his opponent is equally sure, and the extraordinary rapidity with which Dennis spins the batteau, as it were, on her heel, in retrieving a bird which has fallen afar on either hand, while the skiff is obliged to push stern foremost, or to make a curve line for the same purpose, gives the first a slight but decided advantage.

“Hurrah, Dennis!” shouts a fellow in a third boat, as two double shots successively occur to the batteau; “old Greysteel forever!”

Looking at the man we at once recognize our *ci-devant* original who “done” with the fat gentleman on the first of the tide. He has now another jolly-looking shooter in charge, a very different person, however, for we see at once it is our friend Major F. who, although last on the marsh, we will wager a dozen, will not come off least. A moment after two birds spring and cross, and are killed from the skiff at a single shot.

“Hurrah!” shouts a United States officer from the fort, waving his cap, “that is what I call sport.”

A flock of teal, with the singular temerity which sometimes marks the flight of these dainty little ducks, now shoot across the meadow and wheel directly over the boats. Neither shooter gives the least token of their presence, and Dennis's man kills a king rail, which happened to rise at the moment, as expeditiously as ever. The Major being under no such restrictions does not fail to salute the unexpected visitors right and left, dropping three with one barrel and two with the second. Well done, Major; we have had a taste of your sportsmanship; we have seen a specimen of your shooting before. The contest is continued till the sun sinks on the scene, and the shades of evening drive the boats from the flats, just as the tide begins to fall. On counting the game, it is found that one numbers a hundred and four and the other ninety-seven birds. It was a tight match, and the batteau has beaten the skiff by seven birds.

Such animated scenes as this, gentle reader, varied by other incidents, occasionally of a serious nature, occur upon the flats of the Delaware and Schuylkill every day during the season, when the state of the tide will permit. They continue for four or five weeks, when the rail suddenly migrate at night, and as the reed birds generally

depart before, the marshes are comparatively silent and deserted; the reeds wither and are beaten down by the equinoctial gales, and as the season advances, the flats assume their old bleak and desolate aspect, relieved only by the appearance of the crow and the wild duck, or by that of some solitary snipe shooter slowly traversing the drifts with his dog.

Before concluding this article, we would mention that rail have been and are still hunted on foot, on the flood tide. We remember repeatedly to have seen our old acquaintance, Major Deadshot, wading up to his middle on the Broad Marsh, with his dogs, Bob and Dash, swimming around him, and upon more occasions than one, on a scant tide, he has been known to bring in more birds than "the best boat." We are informed that he has killed his usual quantum of rail in this way during the past season, and excepting that his famous dogs have gone the way of all flesh, he is still the same veritable Major Deadshot, upon whom we looked with undisguised reverence, when shooting had an undefined and mysterious fascination for us, in the happy days of our boyhood.

## PARTRIDGE SHOOTING.

THE AMERICAN PARTRIDGE—PERDIX VIRGINIANUS.

*Description.*—"The American partridge is nine inches long, and fourteen in extent; the bill is black; line over the eye, down the neck, and whole chin, pure white, bounded by a band of black, which descends and spreads broadly over the throat; the eye is dark hazel; crown, neck and upper parts of the breast, red brown; sides of the neck, spotted with black and white on a reddish brown ground; back, scapulars and lesser coverts, red brown, intermixed with ash, and sprinkled with black; tertials, edged with yellowish white; wings plain dusky; lower parts of the breast and belly, pale yellowish white, beautifully marked with numerous curving spots, or arrowheads of black; tail, ash, sprinkled with reddish brown; legs, very pale ash. 'The female differs from the male in having the chin and sides of the head yellowish brown.'

The young broods are fit for the sport by the twentieth of October, and although inferior to

their parents in stratagy, fly to cover with equal swiftness and less appearance of labor. They are, however, incapable of sustaining long flights, easier brought down, and less fleet on their legs when winged. When cornered by the dog, they sometimes utter a shrill squeak. They are more apt to crouch at the approach of danger than the old birds, and when scattered by the sportsman make for the nearest shelter, where they keep silent for a time, but soon show their desire to re-assemble by calling and answering each other from different parts of the covert. Their signal notes on these occasions are soft, plaintive and peculiarly expressive of anxiety. The old birds fly further and deeper into the woods, preserve a wary silence for many moments together, and are only to be traced to their hiding places by the keen nose of your four-footed advuvant.

Inasmuch as we observe the partridge invariably taking to cover, when flushed by sportsmen or pursued by birds of prey, and, in fact, passing most of its time near its edge, we might at first glance imagine that the same instinct would lead it to select its place of repose in the deep shade of the thicket. Such, however, is not the case. We know that it roosts in the open fields, but never in the same enclosure in which it feeds, unless it be of unusual extent.



After having filled their crops, towards evening they make a single flight from the stubbles to the spot selected for the roost, on which they alight in a body, nestle close, and stir not again until dawn. Although frequently found in the narrow strips of grass which the mowers leave in a line with the fence, they are careful to avoid roosting near these, and to choose, as near as possible, the very centre of the field. These facts are strongly illustrative of the self-preservative instinct, sharpened into intelligence by the different dangers, to which, sleeping or waking, the bird is continually exposed. To escape from man and other enemies who pursue them by day, they pitch hurriedly into bush or thicket; but when the stealthy prowlers of the wood are abroad, the covey, sitting on an elevated spot in the middle of the field, in a circle of less than twelve inches in diameter, sleep comparatively secure under the wing of night.

But there is yet another fact connected with the roost, which challenges our attention. Many of the feathered tribes bury their heads in their plumage on the approach of evening. Even the restless sea-bird, which, it has been said, never sleeps, has been seen riding the wild waves with its head under its wing. But the partridge after

all its ingenious care to conceal its resting place from nocturnal foes, manifests no such sense of security. The roost is ranged with strict reference to the dangers which, in some degree, menace it still. It is known that the head of each bird is turned outwards, forming, so to speak, a continuous ring of posts, while the tails touch, so that each living segment of that little circular camp of innocents, is ready to start and shift for itself, at the least thrill of alarm.

There is thought to be an appreciable difference in the sizes of the male and female partridges. Occasionally an old cock bird is killed whose weight is worthy of registry. In some parts of upper Pennsylvania where the birds are little disturbed, we have found both of unusual size. During the shooting season the yearling broods are readily known by their inferiority in this respect, and young birds are always to be distinguished from old ones by their smooth, tender, light-colored legs. The legs of the old birds are black and covered with scales. The partridge is found in almost every section of the Union, but it is principally in the Eastern and Middle States, and in some sections of Maryland and Virginia, that it is considered game and systematically hunted with dogs.

Many of our senior readers will, doubtless, remember the time, when the prospect of a day's partridge shooting was sweeter to their youthful fancies, than the mellifluous sound of the Ionian dialect, a high standard class circular, or even a July vacation. Others, again, like the editor, will confess that their ardor in this species of sport was never so intense, as when hunting woodcocks in their marshy solitudes—starting before the peep of day to set decoys for the wild duck, or with Ponto and Dash, after breakfast, to beat up the haunts of the wild and wandering snipe. It was only during the last season, while shooting over the wooded hills near Green Lane, in the upper part of Montgomery, that we were conscious of a slight thrill of jealousy, when our companion unexpectedly killed, towards the close of day, a brace of fine snipe on a wet stubble-field. We did not dream at the moment, of encountering our arch favorite on the very summit of a bleak ridge, on the twenty-ninth day of November; and as the shooter complacently smoothed down the plumage of the birds, and carefully dropped them in the innermost recess of his shooting coat, the action went to our heart. Truth to tell, it cost us a struggle to

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subdue the sinful feeling, it was so very like coquetting with our first love. We had no previous reason to be malcontent, having shot over many points that day at partridge and ruffed grouse; nevertheless, had *we* fallen in with that brace of snipe as the sun went down, we should have restored the gun to its case with a tranquil mind; we should have ridden home by the light of the moon, and blessed our auspicious stars.

But, be it remembered at the outset, that we profess no desire to disparage the merits of this delectable sport, in which, *una voce*, most shooters glory. It has irresistible charms for young and old, and as long as King Nimrod—we had nearly said Ramrod—has a place in the hearts of men—as long as Ponto and Dash can distinguish a stubble-field from a stable-yard—so long will

“The pointer range, and the sportsman beat;”

so long will it be considered as the beau ideal of field shooting. The partridge has been so long and so closely identified with scenes of rural study, and rural industry, and has been so minutely described, that its habits would seem to be perfectly familiar to the public. Sportsmen differ, however, as to several points in the history of its economy, and, according to Mr.

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Herbert, it will be long before even the question of its true ornithological title is settled. "The difficulty," says that gentleman, "lies not so much in the delicacy of the subject itself, as in the utter want of sporting authority in America competent to pronounce a decree." With due deference to Mr. Herbert, we would remark that it is not at all likely that he, himself, will be soon called to the task, since with all his research and experience in the field, he has already made a curious blunder of pronouncing the American partridge, a quail, to which it really bears little analogy, as our townsman, Dr. E. J. Lewis, of Philadelphia, in his Hints to Sportsmen, page forty-seven, has conclusively shown. This error is more remarkable, inasmuch as however fanciful Forrester may be in his description of the *modus operandi* of killing a brace of wild ducks, right and left, from behind a pair of fast trotting nags going at speed, he is generally correct in his appreciation of the habits of the bird which he professes to portray. One of the mooted points in the history of the partridge, is the number of broods which each pair of old birds produce in a season; another relates to what has been rather unadvisably called the mysterious faculty of withholding its scent, when

hiding away from the dogs. The first, although of some little interest to the naturalist, is of still less to the sportsman, except, indeed, when a scarcity of game has been experienced, as in the last season,—during which the gunsmiths of Philadelphia sold less small shot than they have done for years,—and as furnishing a topic for learned discussion on each annual campaign, after his triumphant return from the woods and stubbles. The other more nearly concerns the shooter and his abettors, especially the intellectual nose of Ponto, and is more curious in its phrases, even when stript of the mystical air with which some writers of the day would invest it. In regard to the first point, we would observe, that although the partridge displays more art in the process of nidification than the woodcock, yet from the comparatively late period of her incubation, and from obvious causes connected with agricultural pursuits, the nest of the former is much more frequently found than that of the latter bird. They are also more jealous of intrusion, and more apt to abandon the nest when disturbed. The mere flushing her in this situation, is often resented by an entire and immediate desertion of the spot, which, for weeks previous, perhaps, had been

the object of her especial solicitude. Should the eggs be handled, it is very rare indeed that the bird is again seen on the nest. It would almost seem, that in the mysteries of nature's ordering, the process of incubation of this familiar bird must be carried on in entire silence and solitude; as if the little temple of woven grass and leaves, not to speak profanely, were a very *sanctum sanctorum*, not to be desecrated by other eyes than those of its priestess. When, however, it is once abandoned, the bird does not immediately proceed to lay again, as might, at first glance, be supposed. An interval of some days and even weeks may elapse, during which she may be daily seen sitting listlessly on a fence-rail for many moments at a time, while other more fortunate mothers are already leading about their callow broods. The male closely attends his mate, and would seem, by his silence and drooping attitude, to share in her dejection of spirits. At length, however, another place of concealment is sought for, and another nest made; should the same fate attend this which befell the first, we have reason to believe that, after a second interval, greater or less, the bird will lay again, and her brood, perhaps not more than one-third grown, will be found by the

sportsman as late as the middle of October, or even in November. In fact, so many accidental irregularities occur in the period of incubation, that the farmer will often tell you, that he has seen broods of unfledged birds in his first crop of grass, in his oats, in his wheat, in his corn and, last of all, in his buckwheat. We were long inclined to the popular belief, that as a law of her instinct, the partridge reared two broods in a season, but later observations have inclined us to correct our opinion. These inquiries were principally made in a section of the country where we have resided for years, and shot over for many successive seasons, a section where partridges are comparatively scarce, and which we believe, to be better suited for the purposes of investigation, than a region where they are unusually abundant. In the latter locality, so many late broods, consequent upon the irregularities we have already noticed, will always be met with in the shooting season, that distinct broods will be confounded together by sportsmen as the progeny of one pair of old birds, especially when from accident or design, one or more of these coveys of young birds have been deprived of the fostering care of a parent. In various sections of the Middle States, especi-



ally in the valleys of Pennsylvania, it is not a very rare occurrence for the dogs to point two and even three coveys of different sizes in the same field, and the shooter, observing, perhaps, but one pair of old birds rise in this promiscuous progeny, at once jumps at his conclusion of two broods in a season. It is not thus, however, that assertions are to be advanced and facts established in the history of a bird so jealous of its more occult habits and so impatient of confinement as the partridge. Still the difficulty of obtaining an amount of information which may be relied on, and of keeping a continuous watch upon several pair of old birds, even in a part of the country where the haunts of every covey, for miles around, are perfectly well known, almost precludes the possibility of deciding the question. On the whole, we are inclined to think that the partridge, like the woodcock, as a law of her nature, rears but one brood in a year.

The cock bird relieves the hen at least once during the day, and nestles close to her at night. Indeed, he seldom wanders far from the nest, and from the period of pairing until the young birds are able to fly, is as attentive to his family duties as the turtle-dove or the domestic pigeon.

What is asserted of the English partridge, is doubtless true of our own, that when once paired they rarely separate. It is well known that the partridge may be reared in the barn-yard. In the fall of eighteen hundred and fifty, we saw one of a brood which had been brought up in this manner by a bantam hen. It was then full grown and quietly feeding with the chickens. The experiment has also been reversed, by placing the eggs of the common hen under the partridge. In this case the result was more curious, as the brood of chickens thus produced had all the wild habits of young partridges. In commenting upon this change, Wilson, the father of American ornithology, reasonably observes that "there is scarcely a doubt that the domestic fowl might be very soon brought back to its original savage state, and thereby supply another additional subject for the amusement of the sportsman. But," he adds, "the experiment, in order to secure its success, must be made in a quarter of the country less exposed than ours to the ravages of guns, traps, dogs, and the deep snows of winter, that the new tribe might have full time to become completely naturalized, and well fixed in their native habits." This reminds us of an adventure of a

friend of ours, who, with a companion, had what was termed rare sport, in hunting a brood of guinea fowls, which had been hatched and gone wild in the woods of New Jersey. There was an abundance of brush, and the birds laid well after their first fright, and were all killed over points.\*

In some parts of the old world where game are strictly preserved, the disposition of the domestic fowl to relapse into a wild state has often been noticed. An anecdote of the kind was related to us several years ago by the son of a deceased *oberjagermeister* of the Duke of Hesse D'Armstadt. A common hen had hatched out a brood of twenty chicks in a remote part of the park, and when discovered, both the mother and her progeny, which were nearly full grown,

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\* We once shot for several seasons with a pet pointer, who would stand any bird to which his attention was particularly directed, from a small sand-piper to a tame turkey. It was very apparent, however, from the comic look which his countenance assumed, that Toby comprehended the matter, entering into the spirit of the frolic merely in obedience to his master's whims, and that in his unrestrained, sober moods, he considered such foolery as entirely beneath the line of his business. To cats, indeed, he had an undisguised aversion, and would hunt them through the stable-yard, or stand them staunchly in the field. Nothing appeared to rejoice his heart more, than to be in at the death of a vagrant cat detected in a poaching expedition, and if allowed to take a morsel of her hair, he asked nothing further of fate.

were as wild as pheasants. They were all shot over pointers by the huntsman, with the exception of two or three killed on the trees. It is to be supposed, however, that wild chicken shooting would prove no better sport than knocking over pinnated grouse on the prairies, which, according to report, is but tame work, and although the complete domestication of the partridge would be a feather in the cap of the naturalist, yet upon due consideration, the sportsman will do well to leave the barn-fowl in quiet possession of roost and dunghill.

Besides the shooter who annually goes out to brace mind and body in this exciting sport, the little partridge has many orthodox enemies, so to speak. Piratical hawks are constantly cruising the air round its haunts; the fox, the raccoon and the snake, each has its snatch at the broods; while the farmer's boy, with his Birmingham barrel and cock-tailed cur, or his deadly figure-four, betraying whole coveys, at a fall, to his remorseless clutch, makes war upon them early and late. Even grimalkin, when tired of mousing in the barn or dining off of scraps, will slyly creep away to the field or thicket, to set up her failing appetite on poached game. For every arrow head on its dotted

breast the partridge has its foe, to say nothing of such a winter as that preceding the last. Living in the country, it gives us pleasure to say, that every year we do something in the way of lessening its enemies, by shooting, trapping, or breaking up the nests of hawks, hunting the fox and the coon, smashing the traps, bamboozling the boy, and conspiring against the cock-tailed cur. As to grimalkin, woe unto her, should we once catch a glimpse of her furred skin skulking in the hedge, or crouching in the grass from the dogs. Not all the warlocks in weird-land—not all the carlins which chased Tam O'Shanter, could avert her doom for a single instant. Bleed she must, be she brindle, tortoise shell, black, white, yellow, or gray, and as wise in her moods as Whittington's or that of my lord Marquis of Carrabas.

“ Swift from the tube the leaden vengeance flies,  
And Ponto laughs as poaching pussy dies.”

There is scarcely a season passes but we are called upon to add another tail or two to the talley. Last year we shot a tom among the cedars on Stone Hill, grouse hunting, no doubt, and on returning home were forced to inflict the penalty of the law upon another, a splendid fellow, the very minion of a nursery hearth-rug,

the miniature Bengal tiger of an old fashioned fire-fender ;—but such is the perversity of feline nature,—twice detected in the act of stealing young Shanghai chickens from the coops. On another occasion, while shooting near Dennisville, New Jersey, the dog pointed what we at first supposed, from his look and attitude, to be a hare. In an instant, however, moving on his length, he stood stiffly. Getting sight of Miss Puss stealing away through the rails of the fence, we discharged one barrel at her and the other at one of her intended victims as they rose, and we are happy to be able to state, that even-handed justice gave a tolerably fair account of both. The birds were dusting and pruning their plumage in the bushy point of a wood ; puss was evidently watching their motions, premeditating a glorious pounce, when Ponto, winding the game, pointed her and her unconscious prey at the same moment. The old fellow was not at all confused by the two scents, and showed his satisfaction at the result by looking up in his master's face with eager eyes, begging for a single shake. When gravely reminded that this was decidedly out of character, he solaced himself by wagging his wiry tail, while his countenance wore that knowing, imp-

ish look, which a hard-faced urchin might be supposed to assume, when rubbing his hands in high glee at some unexpected piece of fun.

The fox will trail a running covey, just as a wolf follows "a gang of turkies," by the scent. A medical gentleman was reading under a large shell-bark tree, the lower branches of which formed a complete circle of shade, when he observed a fox coursing like a dog in the same field. After running with his nose down for some moments, he suddenly sprang into the hollow of a stump, out of which at the same instant flew a covey of full grown partridges. Reynard, however, secured one with which he beat a retreat to a rocky hill in the vicinity. This occurred in the month of September at mid-day, and considerably astonished the doctor.

So many useful instructions have been elsewhere given to the young shooter, that we have little to say on this score, except to beg him to remember, that he has no more right to feel flurried in the field, than in the drawing-room. "A gentleman," says Lord Chesterfield, or somebody else, "may be in haste, but he never should be in a hurry." The same rule is strictly applicable to sporting, and the bungler who

interferes with the shots that fall to his companion, or bangs both barrels not at selected birds, nor in reality at the covey, but rather at the *whir* of their short wings as they rise before the dogs, is equally unfortunate with the man who publicly commits some egregious breach of the formula of common politeness. If, however, as is often the case, the shooter finds himself unable to control his nervousness at the critical moment when the dogs are on a point, we advise him to hunt a season or two with an experienced sportsman, when, by observing his motions, and listening to his directions in the field, he will gradually get the better of his own undue excitement, and kill his birds in style. We have known several individuals of excitable temperaments, who have been cured in this way, and now shoot right and left quite as well as their *ci-devant* tutors. A vast deal of the interest which attaches itself to partridge shooting, depends upon the manner in which it is pursued, and there is no sport which admits of more system in its practice. If your dogs are excellent, and your companion one whose temper and habits in the field chime well with your own, you will say, perhaps, that it is the most delightful of sports. Like other varieties of



shooting, it induces cheerfulness—throws care to the winds—strengthens the body, and by giving fresh tone to the mind when overtaken by business, sends the sportsman back to his office, or counting-room, with a new lease of existence. It is the greatest possible service to thousands of persons engaged in the arduous pursuit of professions, which require intense abstraction, and who would inevitably break down if deprived of their usual relaxations in the shooting seasons. “Black care,” says the Latin poet, “sits behind the flying horseman;” but who ever heard of care striding over the fields and through the woods with the sportsman! As the poet has his own world, within the mysterious precincts of which the rest of mankind are not privileged to enter, so the sportsman has his separate existence which no one is permitted to share, save Ponto, without whom, indeed we could do nothing, and who, we are proud to say, belongs to the order. Now dullards, wiseacres and clodpates, stand afar off and scoff both at the poet and the sportsman. “Sblood,” as Hamlet says, “there is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out.”

We should like, however, in the neatest way possible,—being very studious to avoid giving

offence,—to remind the Rev. William Henry Herbert and his followers—we ask Forrester's pardon if we have inadvertently confounded him with the sporting clergy—to remind these gentlemen, we repeat, that it is not exactly in character to prate too much at this season about "western breezes"—"torrent rays of mellow, liquid lustre"—"gay woodlands"—"wreaths of purple light," &c.,—because, we would gently insinuate, that it is by no means the dreamy skies and scenic glories of an American autumn, which makes it so dear to the partridge shooter, with "hie-away!" and "to-ho!" on his tongue. He has little leisure, we opine, to court a humorous sadness in the sunlight of its golden noons, while his dogs are feathering actively before him, and still less to dwell with rapturous melancholy on the gorgeous dyes of the forest, while marking down the scattered birds in a briar bush, or watching them skim away in a sylvan alley. How, we would in all courtesy ask, how can he stop to seek food for thought in the rustle of a sere maize-leaf, when Ponto is on a trail in the furrow, or how, in the name of Pan and all the wood-nymphs, can he hearken to the whistling of the November blast, when the seductive call of "Bob White," has graver charms for

his ears, than the sweet south's sighing overtures, or all old autumn's Æolian music.

“ Full of the expected sport my heart beats high,  
As with impatient steps I haste to reach  
The stubbles, where the scattered grain affords  
A sweet repast to the yet heedless game.  
Near yonder hedge-row where high grass and ferns  
The secret hollow shade, my pointers stand,  
How beautiful they look! with outstretched tails,  
With heads immovable and eyes fast fixed,  
One fore leg raised and bent, the other firm,  
Advancing forward, presses on the ground.”

This is the language of an enthusiastic sportsman, talking in blank verse, and, with the exception of the last line, is as it should be. He says not a word, you perceive, about the beauties of the season; all is merged in the sporting picture before him. He is an Englishman, it is true, poor fellow, and the autumns of his country are rather brown affairs; but the fact is, the rise and fall of empires is nought to him, at that precious moment when his “pointers stand;” and it is this vivid filling up of the scene, this direct and glorious presentation of itself, to the utter exclusion of all other objects, together with a lurking love for gunpowder, which places the modern Nimrod in a charmed circle, and gives its fascination to the sport. “How beautiful they look!” By the way, an excellent rule for

the nervous man is to follow the example just quoted, and take a close look at the demeanor of his dogs, before he proceeds to flush the game. By doing this he will not only receive an edifying hint to restrain his own ardor at the right moment, and consequently learn to shoot better, but also gain an insight into the hearts of his canine friends which will be worth remembering. Ponto is not a mere sporting implement, like the gun, gentle reader; he participates in all the hopes, the fears, the joys of the day, which, however, only stimulates him in the pursuit of game, and makes him staunch and true to his point. He inherits his professional qualities and displays them in the field at a very early age. We now rejoice in a stock of pointers, the puppies of which hunt, stand and back before they are six months old, requiring, in fact, little training except to be taught to keep steady at the report of the gun, and we have seen a setter which had not attained his majority by several months, to astonish a number of veteran sportsmen by the admirable manner in which he found and stood snipe. Whether the dog returns wholly to dust or no, it cannot be denied that he has a soul for sport. The question of his immortality has been ably discussed in a late number of the Edin-

burgh Review ; on this point we have nothing to say here, except to remark *en passant*, that it is a far pleasanter thing for us to spend two or three weeks of a season, in close companionship with a high-bred, intelligent, joyous-hearted animal, than to be shut up for the same time with an austere, pedantic theologian, even though he be a biped of the true Pharasaical leaven, with his bond of immortality signed and sealed in his pocket. But it is high time we had the reader up and out.

In the first place, eight or ten hours of unbroken rest on the night previous is very desirable especially if you are in a section of the country where game abound, and are disposed to keep up your work. We used to be careless on this point in "our salad days;" but now, although we do not mind hunting from dawn until dusk, we invariably retire betimes. In the words of the sporting song,

"It will not do again to say,  
Tho' hearts be still as light,  
That we have hunted all the day,  
And revelled all the night."

The dogs, too, must be carefully attended to. Be sure that they get a good meat supper and are securely lodged on clean litter, with a bucket

of fresh water at their command. Never take a dog into your room to mar your rest by shifting his camp from corner to corner, or beating old Nick's tattoo, with his tail under the bed. He is a thousand times better off in the barn or the stable, where, if you take a look at his quarters before you retire, you will find him all at home, buried up to the nose, perhaps, in rye straw. If, however, he is an especial favorite, and you have serious doubts as to the honesty of the neighborhood—for "train up a dog, and away he goes," is a ludicrous saying which many a sportsman has rued—in that case if you bring him into your sleeping room to make all sure, give him a bed raised a foot or more above the floor, that he may lie out of the draught of cold air, to which, reckless of exposure as he is in the field, he is as susceptible *in cubiculo* as an invalid. If you are not careful in this respect, you will have him sailing about the room, sounding every inch of harbor, like a coast surveyor, and, perhaps, leaping on the bed; or wanting water in the course of the night, he will bring down the wash-stand and its appurtenances about his ears, with a grand crash,—or pull down your shooting clothes, and hauling them out of the current of air, make a dog-mat out of them until morning.

We once knew a valuable pointer belonging to a friend, to open the door of the chamber in which he was lodged with his master, and wandering into the entry, pitch over a part of the staircase unguarded by bannisters, and lay himself up for the season. Moreover, introducing dogs into the sleeping apartments of their masters learns them indolent habits. What will the reader think of a sportsman's suddenly missing his dog at the last moment, with the steamboat in sight from the pier—a dozen unpleasant suspicions crowding on his mind—the bar-tender, boots and the ostler all actively engaged on the scout, and when the rascal turned up at the eleventh hour, he was actually discovered by the chambermaid, lovingly locked in the arms of Somnus in a lodger's bed. Truly, luxury which ruined the Roman empire, would soon make Sybarites of Ponto and Dash, as it has of their cousins, the King Charles and the Blenheim. Clean rye straw in a warm stall is good enough for the villains, in the frostiest night that ever made Dapple cough as she chewed the cud, or honest Dobbin kick at the stable door. They will come out of it in the morning top side up, with shining noses and sinews new strung for a hard day's hunt.

The next morning, breakfast being over, and all things in readiness for an early start, if you have any distance to ride to the grounds which you design to shoot over, by all means take in the dogs. Apart from the looks of the thing, they are liable to be lost on the road in a strange neighborhood, and to be worried by country curs. It is the practice of a sportsman early to accustom his brace of dogs to their places under his feet in a wagon, where they will soon learn to lie still and mute, without discommoding each other or their masters. A dog thus treated enjoys a ride to and from the grounds quite as much as the shooter, and most assuredly equally deserves it. Several instances have come under our notice, of valuable dogs which have been fagged to death by the carelessness or brutality of their owners, in forcing them to run for many miles in warm weather after a hard hunt. Such heartlessness cannot be too severely condemned, and we will venture to say that the persons who were guilty of it, never felt a single spark of the generous feeling inherent in the breast of a sportsman. It should be a standing rule with every shooter who takes a dog into the field, that when I ride my dogs ride also. We have had occasion to notice in our sporting tours, a selfish



indifference to the comforts of their dogs in some men, otherwise keen sportsmen, and a cockneyish affectation of *noli me tangere*, equivalent to get out, you inferior brute—in others. The first are those, called in the vulgar parlance pot-hunters, who, after Ponto has helped to fill the bag, and shown no sign of flagging while there was light left to shoot over him, unceremoniously d——n the dog and deny him a passage though ten weary miles may intervene. The second are the dandy cockneys; “the softly sprighted men,” who are so terribly afraid of fleas that they would on no account sit in the same vehicle with a dog, and who ask, in a voice like the ring of a cracked glass: “How does your fallow greyhound, sir?” Of course it never enters the mind of either of these worthy gentlemen, that the dog, whom they neglect and despise, is the nobler animal of the two, and that they have in reality, little to offer against his fidelity and devotion, except the form made after the Creator’s image. The intellect of the one master is too obtuse, and that of the other too much infused with self-conceit, to dream of such a comparison. Nevertheless, they might well ask themselves, as a child did of a star: “*Is it true?*”

It behooves the sportsman to make sure that no one but the pilot and game-bearer,—who, by the way, should never be permitted to take a gun with him to the field, under any pretence whatever—insinuates himself into the party. If it originally consists of four, it must of course be divided, as two men are enough to hunt in company over any cultivated country. It was our fortune once, while shooting in an adjoining state, to be joined by a party of country gentlemen, to the number of six or seven, who, heaven reward their kindness, though it certainly was misplaced—had turned out in sporting trim to honor our advent. Besides Czar and Dash, we received a reinforcement of two fox-hounds, one terrier, one shock-dog, four nondescript curs and one poodle—a very respectable pack, each and all in good condition, and eager, like their masters, to take the field. The pointer snuffed around this motley crowd with high-bred scorn, and the setter, being younger, did not attempt to conceal his chagrin, but bristled his back and showed his white teeth at each of his strange fieldmates in turn. However, there was nothing else for it, and out we went to the stubbles at seven in the morning, the curs, of course, taking the lead. A covey of birds were speedily found

and scattered, each man doing his best to set on his brute in chase, when the hounds struck a trail, and off they went, yelping to the hills, followed by the terrier and the poodle, and, last of all by their masters. The curs stuck closer, and it speedily appeared that, living upon farms adjoining each other, they were no strangers to those little jealousies and petty heart-burnings, which, to say the truth, are so common among country folks of a certain class.

After considerable preliminary snarling and wrangling, by a little judicious management the feuds blazed out over the body of an innocent opossum, which one of them had dragged out of his hole, and to it, might and main, they went, all except the shock-dog, who, belying his name, stood barking, aloof. A dog fight in the country when the combatants happen to be large, strong animals, as was the case in this instance, is an obstinately contested affair; in attempting to separate the belligerents, their masters became infected with the same pugnacious spirit; down went guns and into the *melee* went the country gentlemen to our great delight, each flourishing a pair of fists a la Hyer; when, noticing the opossum stealing quietly off, (his old trick,) we as quietly followed his sage example, and making for

the nearest road, jumped into a farmer's wagon, which bore us and our four-footed friends some five miles off from the scene of the fray, where we found birds and had fair sport.

Having now entered the stubbles, observe the different modes in which the dogs proceed to traverse the ground. The morning is calm, clear and bracing. The young dog at once dashes out into the centre of the field, quartering his ground as he goes, and feathering in fine style with the hoar frost flying in his track, while the pointer, as usual, directs his course towards the corners, near which experience has taught him the birds are often found. He is not mistaken, for see close to that bunch of broom-corn, near the south angle of the fence, he stands "fast fixed," while the setter, beaten again in the first point in despite of his dash, backs steadily from the spot on which he had already detected some faint effluvia of the feeding game. The shooters come up at quick step, yet cautiously, each in the attitude of a practised sportsman; the covey is flushed, each deliberately singles out and knocks down his birds; the dogs are sent to retrieve either by the command, "seek, dead bird," or by a simple wave of the hand; the game is retrieved; the guns re-loaded, and the

parties proceed to follow the remainder of the covey, which have flown in the direction of the adjacent woods. Just upon its edge the axe has been recently at work, and several trees, still covered with their faded foliage, lie a little to the right of the fence in a line with the flight of the birds. In this cover the covey has doubtless hidden, and with good management a half dozen shots may be obtained on the spot. "Heed! heed! brave dogs!" See, Dash has come upon a bird which has pitched short of the cover under the fence, and he stops short and gives the never-failing sign, while old Czar, the winner of first blood, backs staunch as stone. Now if your eyes be good, you may see that bird lying close to the rail-post, its body drawn up into the smallest compass and perfectly motionless. Its white chin has betrayed it, and you can now distinguish its bright eyes fixed timidly upon you. It has probably struck the ground and ran a yard or two to its hiding place, or the dogs might have passed it by, so tightly is the plumage compressed, and the wings shut down over the odoriferous glands, by muscular actions induced by the influence of fear. Observe how close the setter is to the bird; now just as a man holds his breath when

his pursuers are near, the partridge tightens its skin so as to occupy the smallest possible space, and in so doing, if it lies exactly on the spot on which its feet first struck, it will probably puzzle the dogs, who can detect no effluvia in the air or upon the earth for obvious reasons. You may easily imagine how different is the case when the birds have left a trail, or are feeding in a body, with the scent steaming freely from their feathers. The whole mystery lies in a nutshell;—up whirs the bird from under your feet—missed clean, by Jove!—but the second barrel riddles him, and he lies still short of the fallen timber and close to the fence. An old cock that, for a wager;—but charge your piece, and let us at them, for an old snipe shooter, above all things, detests burning daylight. Mark how cautiously the dogs approach the cover; now Dash is pointing the dead bird: “fetch! so! good dog!”—you that way and I this.

Both dogs point simultaneously on either side of the trees; now, keep cool, and remember, that, as you are shooting a sixteen guage gun which throws her charge very compactly for some distance, you must give your birds a fair start and then kill them clean.

“Whir! whir!”

“Bang! bang!”

Both birds down; both dogs steady as statues! Now charge the empty barrel, and if a bird should rise before you have capped, let it go. You remember the pair of barrels which we saw at Krider's last spring, the left hand one rent at the middle, just where the head of the rod reached, when the hasty gentleman fired at the snipe.

“Ready?”

“All ready.”

“Now kick the boughs on your side.”

“Whir! whir! whir! whir!”

“Bang! bang! bang! bang!”

There goes another—and another, shooting through the trees; they are the last, for see the dogs are off their points; those birds were killed in a style which reflects credit on the art; six down; we will charge, retrieve the dead birds, and push on to a second stubble-field.

You observe how long Dash was in finding this bird, although I knew the very spot where it fell: he passed and re-passed within a few feet of it several times before he discovered it; death having suddenly suspended all the vital phenomena, the dog was in a similar position to

the dead game, as if he was hunting for a live bird, which, in the act of hiding away, had partially or wholly withheld its scent. Now let us away to the next field, for one half of the life of sporting is in its motion. A hard hunter is most invariably a fair shot; but a fair shot is not always a hard hunter.

Hie on, good dogs.—But, mark yonder feathered pirate perched near the top of the tall tree, on the edge of the wheat stubble. He is out after game, too, for see, he has a bird in his talons, and feeling perfectly secure, he is plucking it where he sits. Is there no way of punishing that fellow, and of putting a final period to his depredations? Yes, by Jove, there is. Here comes the farmer down the lane to water his horses.

“Good morning, Adam. Do you see yonder hen-harrier?”

“Ay, I sees the thief.”

“Will your horses stand fire?”

“Ay, here’s old bay Charles—he’s twenty-six next grass—be danged if he doesn’t stand a disruption of ’Suvius.”

“Well then, we’ll put an end to that fellow’s forays on your poultry-yard. Jump on Charles, while I take down the bars; now guide him so



as to pass within a few rods of the tree. I will walk on your off side—the hawk will not move; he sees only one thing at a time, and he knows there is no harm in the old horse. My friend will keep the dogs with him here at the fence, and if you can manage to strike up a careless whistle, Adam, so much the better.”

“Nay, nay,” said the old man in a cracked voice. “I’ve done whistling this many a day since my old dame died; but, an’ you like, I’ll sing.”

“No, no, my good friend,” I whispered as we approached the tree, “that would spoil all.” The hawk still continued to feed, although I was satisfied that he saw the horse plainly enough; once or twice he looked down upon us as if in some distrust; but the farmer turned the horse’s head a little off from the tree, and the bird quietly resumed its meal. We were now close to the trunk; Adam checked the horse, and raising the gun, which I had previously kept out of sight as much as possible, I took a quick aim and fired. The hawk dropped but hung to its perch with one foot, while the other still retained its prey.

“Hurrah!” exclaimed the old man, “give him the other barrel,” and down the plunderer came

at the report, tumbling from bough to bough to our feet, where he lay on his back displaying his spotted belly, barred tail, and sharp talons, with the remains of a hen partridge in his grip. Adam jumped off his horse and examined him with curious attention.

“Be danged, Mister,” said he, pointing to the bird’s neck which was partially bare, “but his head has been in one of my steel traps; the teeth caught in the bait and saved him that time; my boys found the trap sprung and the feathers lying near, and right glad they’ll be to see the thief nailed to the side of the barn.”

“Ay,” said I, “we dare say, but Mr. T. and I must be off;” and bidding the old man good morning, we started for a neighboring copse, in which we suspected the covey had flown, after having been surprised and scattered by the hawk. However, we hunted it through and through without obtaining a single point, and after trying an old stubble thickly overgrown with Indian grass, were about to push on in search of another covey, when, as we approached a hollow in which heaps of brush had accumulated, the old dog drew suddenly up with Dash close in his rear, and, “here they are,” said T., measuring the distance from the tree on which

the hawk was shot, with his eye. There they were, sure enough, having crept to the very bottom of the brush-pile through the dead twigs and branches. We had nine successive shots before the dogs stirred, when T. called them off, declaring that he would not shoot at another bird. In fact, you could hear them squeak and scratch their way out at every kick which we gave the pile—when, in the nick of time, down came a surly countryman, with a hound-cur and a friend at his heels, and ordered us off. The man was at first decidedly wolfish, and half inclined to create a row, but the suavity of T. and the inimitable manner in which he weathered upon him as soon as he found out his name, claiming relationship—by Adam's side, I suppose—and introducing his liquor-flask into the discussion in his fine, off-hand way, put the man in decent humor at last. The other fellow, however, fought shy. He was a shrewd, lantern-jawed, cat-eyed, close-fisted clodhopper; setting his cunning avaricious orbs on T.'s face, for a time he listened with an occasional smirk, to his rigmarole, whittling a stick the while, and turning up his nose at the dogs. I was inclined to let him alone, thinking that he was too much for me, when, after moistening his throat with such

whiskey as he had never tasted before in a dream, he opened his oracular jaws and spake :

“Do you ever shoot gray snipe?” said he.

“Why, yes, sometimes in the spring of the year when there is nothing else to hunt, you know,” answered T., while I silently pricked up my ears.

“Waal,” said the other, “I didn’t know; there’s heaps on ’em on my place.”

“Indeed,” answered T., “try another dash of that whiskey—snipe are strange birds; here to-day and off to-morrow. Your land lies well, Mr. Sluicedam.”

“I s’pose, squire,” said Mr. Sluicedam’s cute friend, screwing up his eyes and recovering his breath after a long drink, “when you goes out arter partridges, you goes out arter partridges, and when you goes out arter snipe, you goes out arter snipe—eigh?”

“Something in that way, I confess,” answered T. “The fact is, you see, Mr Sluicedam, I don’t overlike the water myself, and my friend there had as soon take a kick from a weaned colt as get his feet wet. We don’t get out often, but when you and your friend happen to be in the city, I hope you will give us a call;” and taking

his boot maker's card from his pocket he presented it with his usual grace. We then prepared to move on, when, in spite of a peculiar glance from T.'s eye, I determined to put the question :

"Is that your land which adjoins Mr. Sluice-dam's?" said I carelessly.

"Why, no," said he, with a grin, "it ain't, by a long shot. It wouldn't be no manner of use to tell you where my place be, you know, since you both hate water so. Good mornin' gentlemen."

"Hang the fellow!" I exclaimed.

"*N'importe*," said T., "I have his outlines; here, hold my gun for a moment, I'll fill them up while the impression is fresh." Taking pencil and paper from his pocket, he set down on a stump, and with a few bold strokes and scientific dashes, executed so felicitous a caricature of the countryman, that I could not but smile at the likeness. "Now," said he, "we will show this to our jolly host; he will recognize it at once, and if we are not among our friend's gray snipe to-morrow betimes, we will give him liberty to call us gray geese."

"But the first shot will bring the fellow out upon us," said I.

"No," said he, laughing, "for cousin Sluice-

dam let it ooze out, that his friend and his family were on a visit to his place, to stay over Sunday."

"Then," said I, "he's had, confound him, and I shall knock down his snipe with all the greater satisfaction."

"He must live well inland," remarked T., carefully putting up the portrait, "I never saw him before; and I'll wager now the birds lie in some tussocky meadow, or reedy marsh, along the bank of a creek."

"Or in a wet stubble-field, most likely," said I.

"True," said he. "But send out the dogs, let us kill partridges to-day and snipe to-morrow; though how any sportsmen can compare the two kinds of shooting, rather puzzles me to imagine."

In a few moments the dogs pointed in a buckwheat field, on the edge of a corn stubble, and after obtaining a double shot apiece, we followed them into an orchard, where T. shot a cock bird out of the low crotch of an apple tree. They then pitched into a hedge along the steep bank of a run, with a low, swampy meadow on the further side. Here we killed them singly at leisure, until we had pretty well thinned the covey.

It was now near noon, and after pausing to refresh ourselves at a spring, we debated the propriety of fleeting away an hour or two in a sunny hollow out of the wind, and although the vote was unanimous to keep quiet until the birds had returned to the stubbles, yet such is the restless desire to keep moving, which a man imbibes in the marshes, that the decision was soon reversed with equal unanimity, and resuming our guns, we pushed on.

We will now take occasion to observe to the general reader, that at this hour of the day the birds are most difficult to find, each covey having retired to some out of the way part of the farm which it inhabits, where it lies in a comparatively small compass, basking, pruning and dusting, precisely like chickens in the barnyard or garden on a sunny day, after their crops are filled.

The flight of the partridge from the stubbles, or the drinking-place, is generally direct to the pruning place, so that the dogs can find no clue to the spot, though, occasionally, a sagacious animal, falling back upon his experience, will lead directly to the haunt. This is either on the edge of a copse of young trees, in which the sun's ray penetrates—under the lee of a gravelly

hill—in a sheltered hollow fringed with a few scattered bushes, or under a large bush in a boggy meadow, and we have even found them in a rough, stony country, huddled in the hollow of a large stump. In stormy weather they retire into the woods, in which situations we have flushed them from under a thick cedar bush. On the day in question, the first point after we left the spring, occurred in a line of thick grass close to a rail fence. The birds flew from thence into an open woods, and the covey being a very full one, we had considerable sport in picking up the scattered birds. In hunting up these, T. bagged a woodcock and a ruffed grouse, the first over a point by the setter, while the last sprang at the report of his gun discharged at a partridge, and was wing-tipped, at a long shot, with the second barrel.

A circumstance attended the retrieving of this bird, which went far to show some traits in the disposition of the pointer dog, Czar. It was shot from the edge of a ravine in the woods, and fell among the thick brush at the bottom. I was then in full sight of my companion, with Czar hunting on the brink of the broken ground in advance. Contrary to the dog's custom and regular rule of training, at the report of T.'s gun, he



started down the side of the ravine at a run, but turned and came in at the sound of the whistle, dropping his stern rather sulkily as I thought. The setter was sent into the ravine, but after a long hunt was unable to find the bird. I then directed the pointer "to seek dead bird," but he refused to go out, and showed his teeth when corrected, for which he received a sound thrashing. We then sent both dogs out again, and descended into the ravine, the sides and bottom of which were covered with brush. After searching for the grouse for some moments, we gave it up and climbed the opposite side. When we had advanced about a hundred yards deeper in the woods, Czar suddenly turned back at full gallop and in a few minutes came to my side with the bird fluttering in his mouth. He had, no doubt, observed it fall in the first place, as he had probably seen hundreds fall before, but why he should show any desire to retrieve it before he was ordered, unless he had noticed that it was merely winged, was the puzzle. His sulki-ness and impatience of correction, both of which were unusual, inclined me strongly to think that this was actually the case; and when the bird was found in the manner related, my friend and I were confirmed in our belief. As T. remarked

at the time, it was one of those chance looks into a dog's heart which a man is not favored with every season.

We found four coveys before sundown, and came in at night pretty well fagged, with twenty-five brace and an odd bird, exclusive of the cock and the grouse. On this day's excursion, on the tenth of November, we did not meet with a single covey of birds which were not fully fledged.

The first thing now to be attended to, after swallowing a glass of hot rum-punch and a cracker, is to examine the dog's feet, wash them with whiskey; then see the animals well fed and housed, with an abundance of water at their command. The game is then to be strung and hung out in a secure place, and the barrels of the guns washed out. This being done you may then retire to your room, wash and change; and, curious as it may seem to the uninitiated, descend to the dining-room, a veritable *novus homo*, a genuine new man, with an excellent appetite for the substantial repast, which the host is careful to prepare for the sportsman. If ever a man enters into the heart of his dinner, so to speak, it is after a day's hunt, when the juicy tenderness of a beef-steak melts through and

through him, and the flavor of a wild duck,—if he is lucky enough to have it on the board,—leaves a sort of twang on the palate, which the prince of gourmands might envy. We have a friend who never tastes shad but once during the season, and that is on his first snipe shooting excursion in the spring. The remembrance of that shad, taken out of the river in front of the house where he generally puts up, lasts him during the year, and he is always anxious to be off on the succeeding spring, that he may taste another.

After dinner you may have a glass of punch, a chat, or a rubber of whist, if the party be large enough, and then to bed. Before retiring, T. showed his portrait of the countryman to our host, who, after he had heard the circumstances of the meeting, recognized it at once, and laughing heartily, readily put us on the track of the snipe preserve, assuring us that the fellow was one of the veriest churls and most renowned skin-flints in the state.

“I can’t tell exactly where snipe harbor on his lands,” said he, “for he lives several miles inland from the shore, but it is off the road about a half a mile back from the brick mill. Of course, your dogs can’t miss finding them, if

they are there, and I hope you won't leave a bird on the place. You must look out for his dog if you go near the house, for they say he is as savage as a Turk, and as ready to fight as Paul Jones."

The next morning we were on the road by sunrise, and after an hour's drive came to the mill, where we had the horse put up, and started over the fields at once. After some travelling over very unpromising ground, we suddenly came upon a sunken corn-field of black loam, with the stalks left standing and a gleam of water in the furrows.

"Whist!" exclaimed T., pointing to the house which was within two hundred yards, "here is the ground, let us lose no time."

Accordingly, we crossed the fence and entered at different points, each dog drawing steadily on in advance, with the scent blowing full in his nostrils. In this way they worked up to the game, when—"Scheep! scheep!" up flittered the little gray imps, ten or twelve on a fly, and down again, scarce twenty yards off, apparently regardless of the reports, and showing little disposition to leave the ground. Observing this, I reduced my charges, and soon found that T. had done the same. And now was seen, to the

very best advantage, the admirable qualities of a crack snipe dog. If both animals had not been under perfect command, and gun-wise in every respect, the birds would have soon collected in a body, and left the place for a long flight, as we knew of no snipe ground, except this twenty-acre field, for miles around. But by keeping a few paces in front, dropping at every shot, and advancing as slowly as a dead march, when they heard the click of the gun-locks, while their masters were careful to keep perfectly silent, the snipe were little alarmed, and we had half of them down before they rose higher in the wind than our heads, seeming, as they darted up with their usual weird cry, and alit a few rods off, to be too busily engaged in feeding to regard us in any other light, than peevish interlopers, who would persist in coming between them and their gnome-like operations on the moist earth. It is well known to sportsmen, especially to snipe shooters, that the voice of a man, or the misconduct of a half-broken dog, will do more to scare game away from a feeding ground, than the sound of the guns, and that if the shooters move silently and slowly on, regulating their charges in proportion to the extent of the cover, and the proximity with which the birds spring, it is

next to impossible to drive snipe, found in particular situations, from their feed, before their numbers are pretty well thinned. In the happy observance of these rules by the shooter and his dogs, consists, in our opinion, the perfection of the art, that the one should know how to follow up his game, and the other to be either as slow as a tortoise or as fleet as the wind, just as the occasion may demand. In more than one instance has the sportsman arrived on the ground, and found it dried up, especially in a vast range of flat meadow land; when by sending out a fleet dog he has, perhaps, seen him on a stand, or marked water fly from his feet at a great distance; and upon coming up, lo! here is a wet spot, with a cover of dead reeds, perhaps the only one to be found for miles around—and here he has often killed from thirty to forty birds. And how often, on the other hand, has the sportsman, who from culpable carelessness, or a mistaken spirit of economy, is content to go out with a heedless, half-broken dog, had his temper tried and his day's shooting spoilt, by seeing the birds driven off before he has obtained a half a dozen shots.

A pottering pointer or a setter that habitually rakes, or carries his nose low, no matter how

staunch he may be, is infinitely inferior to a free, up-headed, thorough-broken, fast-going dog of either stock, and such a dog at any time should command a price, of from eighty-five to a hundred dollars. But when gentlemen object, as is often the case, to paying the price, after having made a fair trial of the animal, it is not strange that for one really good dog in our large cities, you will find fifty that will break shot—run in upon a point—prove gun-foolish in the field, and in fact show nothing of the ‘true sporting dog, except his instinctive qualities of finding and pointing game. There are men of good knowledge in sporting affairs, who have attempted to break dogs in a proper way ; but the little encouragement given to them by the public has thrown the business almost entirely into the hands of market-shooters, who, of all classes of men, prove the very worst masters, into whose hands a promising young dog can possibly fall. However, as sporting is largely on the increase among us, no doubt, in the course of time, the evil will remedy itself. In the meantime, never purchase a dog without trying him yourself, especially if he is offered at a reduced price.

We had gradually driven the remainder of the birds into a part of the field nearest to the



house, when, as I fired at a snipe which rose in front of me, I observed the farmer's dog coming down the slope at full speed, and had barely time to whistle in Czar, before the enraged brute dashed into a run between us, struggled through its oozy sides and came at me open mouthed. I presented the muzzle of the gun, which he eagerly seized, trying his teeth upon it several times, though I forbore to fire the remaining barrel, savage as he seemed, with his fierce eyes, cropt ears, broad, bull-terrier head, and jaws like those of a wolf trap. I was more afraid of his getting hold of Czar, who had, himself, a small spice of Satan in his composition, when suddenly he wheeled about, keeping all the time perfectly mute, save a hyena snarl, and re-crossing the run, waded through the mud and leisurely ascended the hill. Re-loading the empty barrel, I advanced still nearer the house and fired again, when down came old Blucher a second time, passed the stream with the same fierce pertinacity, and again tries his teeth on my stub and twist. This time I could not forbear laughing in his face, which made him more furious than ever, though he made no attempt to get at me or the dog, but contented himself with wreaking his wrath on the gun-barrel, against which he



appeared to have some especial pique. In a minute or two he retreated as before, again taking his station on the summit of the hill, and apparently keeping a sharp look-out. At the very next shot, down he came the third time, when, instead of forming a square to receive him, I broke into an uncontrollable fit of laughter, which so enraged T., who had come up in the meantime, that he levelled his piece at his head, and would have put a stop to his peregrinations forever, but for my earnest entreaties to do him no harm. He soon returned to his post of observation, and we afterwards learned from a near neighbor of the farmer's, that the mere report of a gun was sufficient to arouse his fiercest ire, which circumstance was attributed to his having accidentally been shot a year or two before. On the succeeding fall a party from the city got into trouble about the same dog, one of them having shot him dead, while charging him like a perfect fury in a stubble-field.

Having killed thirty odd brace of snipe in the corn-field, and along the run, we were returning to the mill by the lane, when we encountered Mr. Sluicedam's friend and his family returning home from their visit, and a pretty rage the man flew into when he spied the birds in the netting,

for we carried game-bags in those days. He checked his horse at once, and exasperated by a look of triumph which I could not forbear, jumped from his wagon and confronted us.

"Who gave you liberty to shoot over these grounds?" he began, while the miller who was with him, also alighted, and the old lady and the little ones thrust their curious faces out of the vehicle, in expectation of a grand row.

"Why," says T., in his blandest way, "did not you, yourself, tell us that the birds were here?"

"Yes, I did," he replied, working himself up as if he found it difficult to stand our friend's manner and something in his eye, "but I did not tell you to come after them—dang it!"

"My good fellow," returned T., with greater suavity than before, "when next you have game on your place, if you wish to preserve them, let me caution you against showing even so much as their tail-coverts to an old snipe shooter. Good morning!"

So saying he moved on and I followed, touching my hat to the dame, and leaving the two countrymen standing stock still in the lane, as mute as mile-stones. The next day we returned to the city and have heard nothing of Mr. Sluice-dam and his friend since.

Nothing satisfactory is yet known respecting the cause which impels the partridge to shift its locality, for a few weeks, during what is commonly called the running season. These movements occur in October and the first week in November, generally in companies considerably exceeding the usual number of the respective coveys, and are observed to be directed from the north-west towards the sea-board, and the low grounds along the large water-courses. Possibly, they may be governed by an instinctive desire for some unknown species of food, only to be found in these latter districts. The little travellers, like the devotees of old, literally perform their annual pilgrimage barefoot, merely making use of their wings to cross such streams as occur in their route, and running with such amazing swiftness, when encountered by man, as to make it difficult to overtake and flush them, even with a fleet dog. We have frequently met them crossing the roads in great numbers, and at other times observed them running through the streets of towns and villages, and even upon the house-tops, before sun-rise. The same periodical movements have been noticed in the ruffed grouse and the wild turkey, and a few years since a small flock of the latter made their

appearance on the Susquehanna, as low down as Port Deposit. The pilgrimage is said to terminate in the return of the birds to their native haunts, and their re-division into coveys of from eight or ten to fifteen or twenty.

In regard to the companies of confirmed old bachelors, asserted by Forrester to have been found in the family of the American partridge, it is our misfortune, claiming as we do, to belong to the distinguished fraternity, never to have encountered these feathered odd-fellows. In the crowded English preserves, according to the statement of various old writers, such societies do actually exist, and these old cocks do incontinently wage war upon the young ones, partly for the sake of enjoying their privacy, undisturbed by ridiculous affairs of gallantry, which they have long ago found to be mere vanity and vexation of soul, and partly from a delectable spirit of moroseness which, thank heaven, every bachelor beneath the stars, has an undisputed right to affect, whenever he sees fit. We are, certainly, much indebted to Mr. Herbert's penetration in discovering these little isolated communities of Benedicts, which still endure in the midst of gynarchies, and whose habits tally so remarkably with

those of the English partridge, as described by Mr. Daniel and other veteran sportsmen. Some cavillers might hint that Forrester had taken the British accounts and applied them in a slapdash way to the American bird; for our own part, whenever we may chance to meet the odd-fellows parading in the badges of their order, during the season when the rest of the species are divided into pairs, and attending to family duties, we shall not fail to extend the right hand of fellowship towards them, in the shape of one of Krider's stub and twist. Until that time, not wishing to be too hasty in conclusions, we reserve our opinion. We do not, however, believe that the disproportion between the males and females is so great as is represented by some writers; that a plurality of males does exist in the broods is not denied; but we think that even the English accounts are exaggerated in this respect, especially as an error has seemed to have been at one time prevalent in that country, in reference to the markings of the male and female bird.

In its character the American partridge is lively and courageous, very impatient of confinement, and attached in a remarkable degree to the locality in which it is bred. Whether

from old associations or something in their appearance and habits, there is a feeling akin to sweet and innocent fellowship involved in the presence of these birds on a country homestead. The simplicity of their wonted, mellow call, falls soothingly upon the ear in the pleasant summer time, and

“When icicles hang by the wall,”

and the field is wrapped in its mantle of white, one might almost imagine a religious sentiment connected with their appearance in the barnyard, or the print of their tiny feet in the snow, as if they were the fowls of the air mentioned in Holy Writ, and as such must be fed for a little season. In conclusion, we could heartily wish that the few coveys which have survived the severity of the winters of fifty-one and two, might be allowed to recruit their diminished numbers in peace, for several successive seasons.

We shall conclude this article with a brief sketch of Hark, a celebrated setter dog, the property of L. de la Cuesta, Esq., of this city. This dog is of imported stock, and bears so close a resemblance to an engraving of Beau in the third volume of Mr. Daniel's Rural Sports of England, that the likeness of one dog, taken more than a half a century since, might tri-

umphantly pass at the present day for that of the other.

Hark was bred by a Mr. Robinson of Wilmington, Delaware, and came into his present owner's possession at the age of ten months. At that time he was a rough, rugged-looking puppy, and first attracted notice by the steadiness and sagacity which he displayed on the snipe grounds. After purchasing him from Mr. Robinson, Mr. Cuesta was induced to bestow unusual attention to his training, and he subsequently became a very superior animal. Like his counterpart of old,—from whom he may, possibly, be descended,—he was equally excellent on all varieties of game, and as a snipe dog was, perhaps, never excelled. He is of a large size, very roughly coated, of a white color, the ears dashed with dark red spots. In his best days he was hunted with Poke, a liver-colored pointer belonging to the same gentleman, and also a capital field dog. As a proof of the staunchness of Hark, he has been repeatedly left pointing partridges, while the sportsman crossed the fence to shoot over Poke, who had found a second covey in an adjoining field. The first dog was always discovered at his post on the shooter's return. It was only necessary

for his master to speak to him in the first instance, to ensure this, after an absence of nearly an hour, and if found lying on the ground, he would rise and resume his true professional attitude as the parties approached. He was a capital retriever and an expert swimmer. It was, probably, owing to his docility in lying close when so ordered, that the lives of the editor and a friend were not endangered, when crossing the Delaware in a skiff during a south-easterly blow. Had he destroyed the equilibrium of the boat, by shifting his position as the water dashed over him, she must have inevitably filled in the middle of the river.

In hunting ruffed grouse he displayed great skill and sagacity, watching and taking the direction in which the pack flew, though he never acquired that curious propensity which we have seen manifested by some field dogs, to give tongue the instant that the birds are sprung, and marking the tree on which they often alight at this challenge, continue the clamors at its foot, until half the pack is shot down. In this case the infatuation of the grouse, and its inattention to the approach of the shooter and even to the reports of his gun, are more strikingly dis-



played than in any of the instances previously adduced.\* It is necessary, however, to have very sharp eyes, or you will fail to discover the birds, and to shoot the lower ones first, as the rustle attending their fall through the branches of the tree, breaks the force of the spell, and enables the rest to escape. We have never seen this mode of shooting grouse succeed, except in the month of September when the birds are young, though we have repeatedly been assured by farmers, that they have killed old birds under precisely similar circumstances.

Ruffed grouse shooting is generally laborious and unsatisfactory work, though, as a variety, we have sometimes enjoyed a half a day's sport in the rugged hills of Bucks and Montgomery,

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\* They sit upon the large limbs near the trunk of the tree, turning their heads from side to side, precisely as the chicken has been observed to do under similar circumstances, and gazing down in amazement at the dog, which animal would appear to exert as powerful an influence over the birds through the medium of his voice, as he does over water-fowl by his antics on the shore. Had these mysterious powers of fascination been observed in the cat, they would have went far to establish her supposed connection with witches and warlocks, the first suspicions of which, no doubt, rose out of her still and weird-like gravity of demeanor. Tray's spirit, however, shines too clearly through his clay for him ever to be accused of leaning to the black art.

where a few broods still linger. Within our recollection, however, they have entirely disappeared from sections of the country, where they were once often met with. They afford more sport in September, when the young birds are fully grown, and in this month we have occasionally found them in fresh buckwheat stubbles, and in plantations of young trees, in close proximity to the woody and precipitous bank of a stream. On the farm of an eccentric old bachelor, dubbed by his neighbors in the upper part of Montgomery, King John, these birds once bred in undisturbed security. The old fellow was peculiar in his habits, and had not slept from under the roof of his homestead, for fifty years. He suffered a large part of his farm to lie untilled, and never allowed a gun to be fired on his premises, except the venerable fowling piece, which, in imitation of ancient usages, he regularly discharged from his kitchen door at sundown, to let the wicked world within hearing know, that, as usual, he was at home. His house stood upon a hill, one side of which was precipitous, and covered with cedars, oaks and laurels; on this side, a steep and broken path, known as the Devil's staircase, led down to a mill-dam, on which we have occasionally

shot black duck and teal, in spite of King John's *taboo*. As to the grouse which inhabited the woody side of the creek, gentle reader, they *went*, where and how you must invoke the shades of Toby and Carlo to determine.

## WILD FOWL.

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### DUCK SHOOTING.

Proudly pre-eminent among the water-fowl of the United States, for the elegance of its plumage, the exquisite flavor of its flesh, and the sport which it affords the shooter, stands the far-famed canvass-back. Gentle reader, if you have ever lain submerged in a battery on Devil's Island, or in ambuscade in the narrows of Spesutia, and watched them pitching, in their superb way, among your decoys, or bent to your oars on a blustering day, and snatched them from the rough waters of the Chesapeake; or studied the markings of their winter dress, as they lay upon the thwart-board of the scow in pairs of fifty at a time, and finally, if you have sailed, poled or swept back to Havre de Grace by the light of the moon—dropped anchor and gone on shore to dine upon them cooked *au naturel*,—then, perhaps, you have realized, to its fullest extent, the spell contained in those potent words,—

ANAS VALISINERIA.

## THE CANVASS-BACK.

*Description.*—“ The canvass-back duck is two feet long and three in extent, and when in good order, weighs three pounds; the bill is large, rising high in the head, three inches in length, and one inch and three-eighths thick at the base, of a glossy black; eye, very small; irides, dark red; cheeks and fore part of the head, blackish brown; rest of the head and greater part of the neck, bright glossy reddish chestnut, ending in a broad space of black that covers the upper part of the breast, and spreads round to the back; back, scapulars and tertials, white, faintly marked with an infinite number of transverse, waving lines or points, as if done with a pencil; whole lower parts of the breast, also the belly, white, slightly pencilled in the same manner, scarcely perceptible on the breast, pretty thick towards the vent; wing-coverts, gray, with numerous specks of blackish; primaries and secondaries, pale slate, two or three of the latter of which nearest the body are finely edged with deep, velvety black, the former dusky at the tips; tail, very short, pointed, consisting of

fourteen feathers of a hoary brown; vent and tail-coverts black, lining of the wing, white; legs and feet, very pale ash, the latter three inches in width—a circumstance which partly accounts for its great powers of swimming. The female is somewhat less than the male, and weighs two pounds and three-quarters; the crown is blackish brown; cheeks and throat of a pale drab; neck, dull brown; breast, as far as the black extends on the male, dull brown, skirted in many places with pale drab; back, dusky white, crossed with fine, waving lines; belly, of the same dull white, pencilled like the back; wings, feet and bill as in the male; tail-covert, dusky; vent, white, waved with brown. The windpipe of the male has a large, flattish, concave labyrinth, the ridge of which is covered with a thin, transparent membrane; where the trachea enters this, it is very narrow, but immediately above swells to three times that diameter. The intestines are wide, and measure five feet in length.”

Ranking next to the canvass-back, in the estimation of the sportsman and the epicure, is

## THE RED-HEADED DUCK.

ANAS FERINA.

*Description.*—"The red-head is twenty inches in length, and two feet six inches in extent; bill, dark slate, sometimes black, two inches long, and seven-eighths of an inch thick at the base, furnished with a large, broad nail at the extremity; irides, flame colored; plumage of the head, long, velvety, and inflated, running high above the base of the bill; head and two inches of the neck, deep glossy reddish chestnut; rest of the neck and upper part of the breast, black, spreading round to the back; belly, white, becoming dusky towards the vent by closely marked, undulating lines of black; back and scapulars, bluish white, rendered gray by numerous transverse, waving lines of black; lesser wing-coverts, brownish ash, wing-quills, very pale slate, dusky at the tips; lower part of the back and sides under the wings, brownish black, crossed with regular zigzag lines of whitish; vent, rump, tail, and tail-coverts, black; legs and feet, dark ash.

"The female has the upper part of the head dusky brown, rest of the head and part of the neck, a light, sooty brown; upper part of the

breast, ashy brown, broadly skirted with whitish; back, dark ash, with little or no appearance of white penciling; wings, bill and feet nearly alike in both sexes. The male of this species has a large, flat, bony labyrinth on the bottom of the wind-pipe, very much like that of the canvass-back, but smaller; over one of its concave sides is spread an exceeding thin, transparent skin or membrane. The intestines are of great width, and measure six feet in length."

After the red-head we have the bald-pate, or

## AMERICAN WIDGEON.

ANAS AMERICANA.

*Description.*—"The widgeon, or bald-pate, measures twenty-two inches in length, and thirty inches in extent; the bill is of a slate color; the nail, black; the front and crown, cream colored, sometimes nearly white, the feathers inflated; from the eye, backwards to the middle of the neck behind, extends a band of deep glossy green, gold, and purple; throat, chin, and sides of the neck before, as far as the green extends, dull yellowish white, thickly speckled with black; breast and hind part of



the neck, hoary bay, running in under the wings, where it is crossed with fine, waving lines of black; whole belly, white; vent, black; back and scapulars, black, thickly and beautifully crossed with undulating lines of vinous bay; lower part of the back, more dusky; tail-coverts, long, pointed, whitish, crossed as the back; tail, pointed, brownish ash; the two middle feathers an inch longer than the rest, and tapering; shoulder of the wing, brownish ash; wing-coverts immediately below, white, forming a large spot; primaries, brownish ash; middle secondaries, black, glossed with green, forming the speculum; tertials, black, edged with white, between which, and the beauty spot, several of the secondaries are white.

“The female has the whole head and neck yellowish white, thickly speckled with black, very little rufous on the breast; the back is dark brown. The young males, as usual, very much like the females on the first season, and do not receive their full plumage until the second year. They are also subject to a regular change every spring and fall.”

To this description of Wilson's, Brewer adds the following remarks concerning the European widgeon :

“This species (the American) is closely allied to the European widgeon. They seem to meet each other about the Artic circle; that of the American extending beyond it, and that of Europe reaching to the European verge. The bird of Europe, except in the breeding season, is mostly an inhabitant of the sea-shore; during a severe winter, a few stray inland to the larger lakes and rivers, but as soon as a recurrence of moderate weather takes place, they return to their more favorite feeding grounds. In Britain they are mostly migratory, and at the first commencement of our hard weather, are found in vast flocks on the flatter coasts, particularly where there are beds of muscles, and other shell-fish. During the day, they rest and plume themselves on the higher shelves, or doze buoyant on the waves, and only commence their activity with the approach of twilight. At this time they become clamorous, and rising in dense flocks from their day's resort, proceed to the feeding grounds, generally according with the wind in the same tract. At the commencement of winter, they are fat and delicate, much sought after by sportsmen, and are killed by persons lying in watch in the track of the known flight, or what, in some parts, is called *slaking*.

The most propitious night for this sport is about half moon, and strong wind; the birds then fly low, and their approach is easily known by the whistling of their wings, and their own shrill cry; whence their coast-name of *Hew*.

“They are subject to annual change of plumage. Mr. Ord mentions, that a few of these birds breed annually in the marshes in the neighborhood of Duck Creek, in the state of Delaware. An acquaintance of the editor’s brought him thence, in the month of June, an egg, which had been taken from a nest situated in a cluster of alders.”

Next to the widgeon comes the black-head, or

## SCAUP DUCK.

### ANAS MARILLA.

Called the Blue-bill on the Delaware and the Black-head on the Chesapeake.

*Description.*—“This duck is nineteen inches in length, and twenty-nine in extent; bill, broad, generally of a light blue, sometimes of a dusky lead color; irides, reddish; head, tumid, covered with plumage of a dark, glossy green, extending half way down the neck; rest of the neck and breast, black, spreading round to the back; back

and scapulars, white, thickly crossed with waving lines of black; lesser coverts, dusky, powdered with veins of whitish; primaries and secondaries, brownish black; secondaries, white, tipped with black, forming the speculum; rump and tail-coverts, black; tail, short, rounded, and of a dusky brown; belly, white, crossed near the vent with waving lines of ash; legs and feet, dark slate. Such is the color of the bird in its perfect state. Young birds vary considerably, some having the head black, mixed with gray and purple, others the back dusky, with little or no white, and that irregularly dispersed. The female has the front and sides of the same white; head and half of the neck, blackish brown; breast, spreading round the back, a dark sooty brown, broadly skirted with whitish; back, black, thinly sprinkled with grains of white; vent, whitish; wings, the same as the male.

“The windpipe of the male of this species is of large diameter: the labyrinth, similar to some others, though not of the largest kind; it has something of the shape of a single cockle shell; its open side, or circular rim, covered with a thin, transparent skin. Just before the windpipe enters this, it lessens its diameter at least two-thirds, and assumes a flattish form.”

The use of this labyrinth in the trachea of this and others of the genus, is, doubtless for the production of certain peculiar sounds, by which the bird communicates different emotions to its fellows.

The three last described ducks are all companions of the canvass-back, and like it, feed upon the same aquatic plant, a species of *valisneria*, which abounds upon the submerged flats at the head-waters of the Chesapeake. It grows in from seven to nine feet water, has a narrow blade, four or five feet in length, and a delicate, semi-translucent root, like very small celery. The canvass-back, which is the most expert diver, tears the grass from the shoals with its strong bill, eating only the root, while the others regale themselves on the rejected part, or the blade. They are, however, accused on good evidence, of occasionally snatching the entire plant from the bill of their provider, the instant that it re-appears, and this species of petty larceny is especially charged upon the widgeon, which, besides being of a lively, mercurial disposition, is known never to dive, except when dodging a pursuing boat, and too much crippled to take wing. The canvass-back often resents this injury, and the feeding ground is the scene of

many a squabble, precisely similar in character to those which are every day witnessed among our tame fowl, on the pond and in the barn-yard.

All these ducks stool readily, except the wid-geon, which is apt to soar and make off as it nears the battery, often giving the alarm, in this way, to whole flocks of other ducks, which are on the fly for the decoys. On this account it is rather in bad odor with the shooters of Havre de Grace, who, while watching the box from the scow, rarely fail to exult in the fall of a bald-pate.

Canvass-backs, however, afford the best sport, as they fly more compactly and dart better than any other species of duck. In eluding their pursuers by diving, milling round and swimming under water, when pinioned, they are only equalled by the scaup-duck, and a chase after a crippled "hickory quaker" or a "bay black-head," is sometimes only to be successfully ended by driving them into very shoal water, where they are speedily knocked in the head.

Late in the fall of the year 18—, while partridge shooting in the neighborhood of the Chesapeake, we received an invitation from Mr. J. W. McCullough, of Port Deposit, to accompany him

on an excursion in a new scow, which he had built and equipped after the most approved manner, especially to kill ducks in the Susquehanna and the upper bay. She was wall-sided and flat-bottomed, forty feet long and nine feet beam. She carried a jib and a large fore and aft mainsail. A space barely sufficient for a tall man to lie at length, was decked off forward, and contained three or four bunks and a small stove, besides the stooling guns, several bags of heavy shot and kegs of ducking powder, not to speak of a quart coffee-pot and two large baskets of provender. This was the hardy duck-shooter's cabin; it was well pitched so as to be waterlight, and was entered by a small scuttle with a slide; here he cooked, eat, slept, kept tally of his game, manufactured the heads and necks of decoys, cut his gun-wads, spun his yarns, drank his grog or coffee, and kept care outside from October until April, during the severest season of the year.

The scow's rudder was set on a pivot so as to be readily unshipped in case of necessity, or to be used like the steering-oar of a whale boat, in throwing her head around. She had large lee-boards, which enabled her to lie very close to the wind in moderate weather, though from her

shape and her being all above water, she was sure to make much leeway in a rough sea. Going large in fair weather she sailed and steered well, and in fact, was just the sort of craft which is especially adapted for navigating the shoal water of the upper bay.

Midships rested the battery or "sunk-box," of which we shall soon have occasion to speak, and piled up in great heaps abaft on either side, but so as not to interfere with the motions of the rudder, were the decoys or wooden ducks, each having its cord, with the weight attached, wound round its body, the last turn being taken round the neck, regular duck-shooter fashion. They had evidently seen service from their bleached and weather-beaten looks. Some of them bore the appearance of having been recently pretty well peppered in the way of business, and particles of grass might still be seen adhering to the anchors and cables of a few of the uppermost. The scow was furnished with raft-poles, and heavy oars or sweeps to be used in forcing her over the flats in a calm, and two large, four-oared, flat-bottomed boats, called yawls, towed astern.

At two o'clock on a cold, clear morning, we set off from McCullough's hospitable roof, and



traversing the single, straggling street, reached the scow at Wilmer's wharf, where we found the helmsman and the boy waiting for us on board. The fastenings were cast off, and getting clear of the rafts, we run up the jib, and with the wind fresh from nor'-west, stood down along the shore, which is bold, and could be just seen from the scow, with here and there the white front of a dwelling, looming up above the town in the dim glimmer of the star-light. It was our intention to set the battery on Devil's Island, so called, though in reality it is nothing but a sunken shoal, lying nearly south-west from Havre de Grace, and on the western side of the *swash*, or channel through the submerged flats. These last, be it understood by the general reader, extend for eight miles or more from the mouth of the river to the island of Spesutia, and are the feeding grounds on which tens of thousands of the choicest species of ducks, are annually slaughtered by the market-shooters of Havre de Grace. Below Spesutia the water is deeper, but from the island to Havre de Grace the ship-channel is, so to speak, but a mere "swash." This entire ground, from the slight rise of the tide, and from the fact of its being thickly covered with grass, which is the food of the

fowl, and serves also to break the force of the seas, which roll in from the lower bay, is especially suited for the operations of the floating batteries.

It was our good fortune to be accompanied on this excursion by an old friend from the city, whom we encountered at Port Deposit, and after seeing the mainsail set, and the craft fairly under way, steering for Havre de Grace light, we retired to the cabin, to while away the time by listening to the sporting experience of the owner of the scow, or by chatting over adventures of the past. Passing Havre de Grace, we found the duck shooters of that place already on the stir, and were successively hailed by Baird, Holly and other famous shots, who were preparing to drop down to their respective anchoring grounds.

Coming to, at last, just as the moon rose, we dropped anchor on the shoal, and waited impatiently until within a half an hour of daybreak, when, all things else being in readiness, we went to work transferring the decoys into the boats, and launching the battery over the side. This last was done by our united strength as carefully as possible, so as to avoid shipping water into the box, McCullough then stepped

into the box, unfolded the floating wings and turned up the guards; several pigs of iron, sufficiently heavy to sink the frame of the battery to the water's edge, were handed in; a board, covered with a blanket, was then laid over these on the bottom of the sunken box, and after receiving the guns and ammunition, the occupant pushed off from the scow with his boat-hook, while we jumped into the yawl to tow the machine head to wind on the selected spot, and assist in setting the stools. The former was then anchored stem and stern, and by the waning light of the moon we proceeded to dispose the decoys, in the arrangement of which McCullough, like most expert duck-shooters, was very fastidious.

They were placed so as to ride freely without coming in contact with each other, principally at the stern and on either hand of the side wings, the perfection of the art appearing to be to avoid leaving a gap in any part of the rank, and yet to prevent, if possible, the ducks from falling foul. A few of the lightest were placed immediately on the wings, and several heads of decoys were firmly fixed on wooden pins on the deck of the battery. The false ducks were not all imitations of canvass-backs, but had red-

heads, black-heads, and a few bald-pates, intermingled with the nobler variety. The outside duck at the tail of the rank was a veteran canvass-back, facetiously called the toller.

The rank being now complete and made to mimic life to admiration by the action of the ripples,—as each duck rode knowingly to its anchor,—and the frame in which the box was set flush with the water's edge, yet preserved from filling by the floating wings fore and aft, and at the sides, of course, the box being deep enough to receive the body of a man laid at length, must be sunk some eighteen inches below the surface, and the shooter 'himself, in his watery ambuscade, perfectly invisible to the passing ducks, except from the air immediately over his head. The water being moderately smooth, the guards were then turned down flat with the deck, and while the boats pulled back to the scow, which immediately lifted her anchor, the shooter loaded his three guns, and placing them in the box with their muzzles resting on its edge, took a last look at his decoys; then observing daylight breaking in the east, he laid himself flat on his back on the board, and shut out from every object and every sound, save the pale, dull sky and the slight, rippling plash

within an inch of his head,—all eye and ear, waited patiently for his first dart.

We had hardly anchored about a half a mile higher up, so as not to interfere with the flight of the game, which, as a rule, work to windward and of course come up to leeward of the shooter, or at his feet, before we heard the faint report of his gun, although it was not sufficiently light to see either the ducks or the decoys from the scow.

The boy continued to report shot after shot, while we were engaged in eating our breakfast in the cabin, and as we came out, Davis, the helmsman, directed our attention to a large flock of canvass-backs, some of whom he swore in his emphatic way, “were going into the pot.” Glancing along the broad expanse of water on which the sun had now risen, we plainly saw the ducks sweeping swiftly up to the tail of the decoys, among which the foremost had hardly alighted, before you saw the dark figure of McCullough rise from the water as if by magic—then the successive discharges, and the white water occasioned by the fall of each duck, the helmsman counting five down. The next instant the shooter was standing up, waving his cap, and jumping into the yawl with Ben Davis, we

pulled away with might and main to secure the dead ducks.

Fifteen canvass-backs and three red-heads were picked up, two of these, which were crippled, being shot over, as the phrase goes, with a small gun loaded with number eight. We then rowed straight for the battery, in which McCullough now insisted that we should take our turn. There was no time to argue matters with ducks on the fly ; so landing on one side of the deck, while he came off at the other, we took our place in some trepidation of spirit, years have been intervened since we had drawn trigger on wild fowl, if we except occasionally knocking over a crippled sprig-tail or mallard on the snipe grounds. The remembrance that our friend from Philadelphia was a capital duck-shot, by no means tended to allay this feeling, and it was not until the sound of oars had died away on our ears, and we felt ourselves, as it were, alone with the decoys, which kept bobbing their heads as if they were actually swallowing duck-weed with the greatest possible gusto, and shifting their bearings with inimitable gravity, that we regained our wonted nerve, and made up our mind to mischief. The next moment our ears were saluted by the whistling of fowls' wings, and the

patter of their feet in the act of alighting on the left of the battery; seizing the small gun we sat up in the box and knocked over one canvass-back swimming among the stools, and a second as it rose, and catching up the second gun fired ineffectually at two others making off; then charging the pieces, cast a glance at the dead birds to ascertain the direction of their drift, and sank back out of sight, without as much as looking at the scow, feeling very certain that had the presence of mind, in which we felt so assured before, governed our actions, all four ducks would have been at that moment floating dead on the tide. In fact, gentle reader, in the unexcusable heat of the moment, a great blunder had been committed in shooting at the ducks in the water, when we should have first drawn trigger on those yet upon the wing, but in the act of dropping their sterns, to alight outside of the first; when we should have used the second gun on the others, which would have still been within available distance. Had Fred been there, we thought, he would have had four ducks down; but, *n' importe*, let them come again.

But at least ten minutes of expectation elapsed before another shot was obtained, during which time, to recover our coolness, we watched the

motion of a red-head decoy, close to the after wing. A comical-looking, hard-a-weather old fellow he was, with the nail of his bill shot off and his head turned over his back, and there he kept veering and bowing, now looking us right in the eye over the edge of the wings, as he topped a small surge, and now disappearing from our sight again,—when, all at once, a small flock of black-heads appeared, setting their wings to alight, as it seemed right over him, and rising more coolly this time, we managed to kill three out of seven and cripple down a fourth, without finding occasion to use the second gun, the survivors going off so swiftly to our right, that they were far to leeward by the time we had turned. After this we had pretty shooting for about an hour, when Davis came out to relieve us, Fred preferring to take his turn in the afternoon, as the swell was sinking fast with the wind, and in a half an hour it bade fair to be calm. Accordingly Davis had not fired more than a half a dozen shots, killing a canvass-back at each discharge, before the water was as smooth as a mill-pond; our own decoys and those of one or two other batteries at a still greater distance, loomed up on the glassy flood as large as geese; the ducks ceased to stool, and we passed away the



time until noon chatting, and examining the game, which lay ranged in pairs on the thwart-boards, or starting up as the report of Davis' gun told of an occasional shot at a single duck, passing over his stools, on its way up or down the bay.

While we were at dinner a circumstance happened at the battery, which almost caused Davis to avow himself a believer in the doctrine of predestination, at least as regards wild fowl shooting. Not having had a shot for some time, he was lying at his ease with his cap drawn over his eyes to defend them from the vertical rays of the sun, when a swan passed slowly over his decoys, and strange to say, every gun in the battery missed fire, and the noble bird continued its course down the bay unharmed.

"I had drawn for his neck," said the unfortunate duck-shooter, "and was as sure of him as I was of my supper; but the Walker caps are not worth the copper they are made of any more, and I suppose the d——d bird would have gone free, if I had fired the biggest swivel-gun on the Potomac at his head, at the same distance."

"No doubt of it," said we; there is no fighting against fate—but to change the subject, were you ever caught in a heavy blow in one of these tubs, Ben?"

“Was I?” he echoed, looking sideways at us, while he kept his swarthy face turned like a wall towards the box, in which Fred was now lying; “you see, sir, we left Annapolis that morning bound for the Potomac for a change of ground; the wind was west when we started, but soon hauled to N. N. E. and then back to north, blowing a regular persimmon gale. I was at the helm—Tom painting decoys,—when the sail jibed and she came head to in spite of us—shipped three seas in less than three minutes—a hogshead of water at each sea—lost all the decoys overboard—started the sunk-box—tore mainsail from the gaff, and had to run into Cove Point harbor, eight miles from Patuxet river, where we lay snug enough until it had spit its spite.”

“A good harbor that?” we asked by way of passing time.

“Ay,” said he, “the best on the Chesapeake—a perfect basin—but d——n that swan and the hen that hatched him! I don’t care for the value of the bird, sir—I’ve seen acres on acres of ’em at a time, mixed in with geese,—but by the North Pole, it was enough to make a man forswear father and mother and turn Turk to lose the shot.”

“But where did you see swans by the acre?” said we.

“Where?” he repeated, “why in a dozen places, to be sure; but the most I ever did see, was on a sandbar, with rocks at its head, that makes up and covers the mouth of the Yeocomoco river. There’s two bars, by the way, both making from the mainland, one up from the mouth of the river, and the other down; there’s not a foot of water on either bar; you must stand up between the two, or you’ll stick. Both bars were covered with geese and swans, and when they got up a half a mile off, they made a noise like all old Nick’s hounds in full cry;—but there goes a small dart of red-heads—no, they’ve turned—yes—there they go—there they go, straight for the decoys—four ducks down!”

“Ay,” said McCullough, “Mr. W. shoots ducks well; I’ve been out with him before; he’s quite as sure in the box as you or I, Ben.”

“Ay,” answered Ben, “it may be, in moderate weather and when the ducks come well up: but what would he do in the box in a heavy swell, with the wind as keen as a knife, on a December day?”

“Oh!” said McCullough, “that is a horse of another color. The clouds are moving in the

nor'-west; we shall have the breeze in the old quarter."

"Here it comes," said Ben, "we shall kill ducks fast before sun-down."

"Whose scow is that anchored in shore in a line with yon bluff, Ben?"

"Baird's, I reckon," answered Ben, "and he has had shooting; the ducks have been flying that way all the morning."

The wind soon freshened, and the bay was all animation again, the ducks flying in large flocks, the batteries cannonading, boats plying to and fro, and Fred shooting in a style not to be surpassed. The puffs of smoke rising from the water's edge, reminded us strongly of the hurried glimpse which a sailor sometimes gets of a white jet or spout, when he turns his head for a moment, while pulling to windward in chase of a gallied sperm whale; and the sight of a dark figure suddenly seen standing apparently on the water a half a mile off, and then as suddenly sinking again, bore some resemblance to a much rarer sight, a whale's head thrust vertically out of the sea, seen from the masthead at the horizon's verge on a clear day.

In the course of the afternoon Davis and ourselves had a sharp chase after a crippled duck;

from the trouble it gave us we both supposed it to be a canvass-back, but after being killed at last by a snap shot, it proved to be a black-head.\*

Fred continued in the box during the whole afternoon, and as far as our remembrance serves us, did not miss a single duck. At sun-down we pushed off from the scow to "take up." While securing the decoys, a canvass-back darted twice between the boats and the battery, and returning a third time was killed by our city friend who was still in the box. We have often observed this sort of infatuation in the most wary and shy of the feathered race; time after time in the falcon tribe, and even in the common crow. We have shot hawks in close pursuit of woodpeckers and other small birds in an open field, and in one instance, after witnessing from the barn-yard a very interesting chase between the *Falco Columbarius* and a tame pigeon,

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\* It is remarkable that a dog accustomed to retrieving ducks from the water, will give over the chase after a crippled canvass-back, as soon as he perceives the object of his pursuit is able to make a long stretch or two beneath the surface. Experience has taught him that all his skill and sagacity are thrown away, when brought into competition with this cunning and powerful duck. The large channel black-heads, or those which frequent the bay, are almost as long breathed and as deep divers.

killed the former but a few feet behind the latter, which, but for the timely rescue, must inevitably have become its prey.\*

Taking out the dogs during the past winter, they pointed a single crow, which being busily engaged in digging some object from the ground, allowed us to come within ten yards of it, although we had a gun in our hands at the time, which circumstance, gentle reader, while it rather invalidates the popular notion that the crow is able to scent powder, shows that the eye of the bird was fully engaged with the object on the ground, and did not in reality see us or the dogs, until its attention was attracted by the sound of our approach. The study of the vision of birds is one of the most beautiful and interesting departments of natural history ; with the exception of that of flying, perhaps, the

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\* When we first noticed the hawk, it was some distance down the wind in the act of darting upon the pigeon, which it missed. The pursuit was then continued, both parties beating to windward by short tacks, the pigeon occasionally putting about with great adroitness when hard pressed, and gradually nearing the barn, as the one redoubled its exertions to come up, and the other to escape,—until when fairly within shot, we decided the matter at the very moment that the piratical cruiser of air was gaining on the chase, as the sailors say, hand over hand. The pigeon alit upon the roof of the barn, and as if sensible of its narrow escape, remained perfectly quiet for a considerable time.

most so of all to the scientific inquirer. When we reflect that they do not see objects as we do, but with a magnifying power, which, according to the adjustment of the focus of the eye, has been compared to that of the telescope or the microscope, there is no doubt that in each case we have related, the eye of the bird was, so to speak, so filled up with the object on which its vision, for the time, was earnestly bent, that it saw adjoining objects but very imperfectly, just as the falcon has been known to fly in full career against a tree in pursuit of a partridge, and the duck, after twice avoiding the men in the boats near the battery, met its death, at last, over the decoys which it was so desirous to join.

Taking up some two hundred decoys on a cold, blustering evening, is rather tedious and benumbing work to a novice. While one person manages the oars, the others pick up each duck singly, so as not to entangle it with its fellows, and, after winding the cord round its body and removing the weed from the weight, stow it away in the bow or stern of the yawl. In the meantime the man in the box, laying aside his guns, secures the few ducks near the wings, turns up the guards, and as soon as the stools are all in the boat, weighs the anchors of the battery, and

is towed down to the scow. The contents of the boats and the box are then passed on board, and lastly the battery itself; after which sail is made for home.

On reaching Havre de Grace, we went into Baird's hotel, where the duck shooters of the place are in the habit of congregating to talk over the exploits of the day.\*

These men are both fishers and fowlers, being engaged during the spring and part of the summer, in the extensive fisheries of the Potomac and Susquehanna, and returning to their more congenial occupation in autumn. They are generally well informed on all matters connected with their business,—sometimes even acute, and some of them realize handsome profits in their hardy and exciting pursuits. They are almost universally expert shots; indeed, it is

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\* While harboring in a creek on the eastern shore, on one of our excursions, the necks of a fine pair of canvass-backs were eaten off by a minc, although they were the only brace in the lot, and had a number of inferior ducks hung on either side of them. In fact, old shooters seriously declare that this little animal, which often swims off at night to the scows in search of plunder, knows the flavor of a canvass-back, and will never touch a commoner kind of duck when the former is to be had. Some years ago we were shown in the store of Mr. Lyons, at Havre de Grace, a large pet cat which was said to show the same epicurean delicacy of taste when occasion offered.



as common for a man reared on either shore to shoot well, as it is for a dog in the same sections to swim and dive like an otter. Many of the poorer inhabitants train their large dogs not only to retrieve ducks shot from the shore, but also to assist in bringing in quantities of drift wood, which come down the stream with "a fresh." Some are said to supply themselves with winter fuel in this way. We remember to have watched with interest, from the Port Deposit side, the efforts of a large cur dog to tow in a fragment of lumber, after which an old negro had sent him out into the stream. The log was heavy, some distance out, and the river on the rise; for some moments the old fellow was in a state of great excitement between hope and fear; but at last the faithful animal succeeded in getting the wood into the eddy off shore, when Pompey showing the remains of his teeth in a tremendous grin, jumped into a shattered and leaky boat, and sculled off to his aid.

The next morning we anchored the battery on the eastern shore, between Havre de Grace and Port, off Stump's Mill. The wind was easterly; the weather cold and stormy; and a great many ducks on the fly down the river. Your ears were constantly saluted with the *when! when!*

of the widgeon—the harsh cry of the south-southerly—the whistling wings of the golden-eye—the quack of the butter-ball; and you were kept constantly on the alert, knocking over canvass-backs and red-heads, until near noon, when the wind increased to a half gale, the battery went adrift, the scow dragged her anchor almost at the same moment, while the boat was off, and for a while, we were, as sailors say, caught in a heap. Giving up the search for the dead ducks, we pulled might and main for the battery, while Fred and the boy lifted the scow's anchor, and hoisting the jib, ran closer in shore. On approaching the box, we found McCullough standing knee deep in water, having thrown overboard all his iron, after driving down through the decoys. The battery had then brought up, but the waves were making a clean breach over the box, and the stools were in a confused state of entanglement and disarray. Some had been detached from their weights and were floating off, or going on to the lee shore *to caulk*, as Davis expressed it, tumbling about on the waves as if in joy of their escape; others were foul of the anchors under the frame of the battery, and the rest in a cumber; while the wind blew stiffly, in gusts, from the heights of the opposite shore—

the river grew every moment more rough, and the tall frame of McCullough, standing apparently on the water, and actively plying boat-hook, as he grappled for the anchors, reminded one strangely enough, in the midst of the scene, of the picture of Washington crossing a river on a raft, on his mission to Fort Le Beuf in the old colonial days. Working hard, it was some time before we secured the decoys and shipped the battery, when after taking a bumper of good old Bourbon all round, we stood over towards Port, beating, scow-fashion, broadside as often as bow on. We afterwards heard that Baird and several other shooters below, had drifted completely across the *swash* in their batteries that morning. No serious accident happened, and so far as we are informed, no case of drowning ever occurred in the batteries on the Chesapeake. The case to which Dr. Lewis refers in his article on duck shooting, was occasioned by the sinking of an old yawl, loaded down to the water's edge with stones, as a substitute for a battery. She was struck by a sudden flaw of wind, and, of course, sunk, drowning her occupant, who either from inability to swim, or from some unexplained cause, went down with her in eight or nine feet of water.

Formerly ducks were very abundant on the western shore between Port Deposit and Havre de Grace, and great numbers are still killed from blinds and batteries, from the bridge, down to Stump's Point at the mouth of Furnace creek. The digging of the tide-water canal, however, drove the ducks off the flats and marshes of the western shore. Below Havre de Grace, on the western side of the *swash*, near Donahue's battery, is good canvass-back and red-head ground. About half a mile from the battery, to the eastward, Mr. Charles Boyd of Havre de Grace, killed one hundred and sixty-three canvass-backs, on the tenth day of November last, and we have been assured that in the spring of eighteen hundred and fifty, the same famous duck-shooter killed two hundred and seventy-one canvass-back, and red-heads off the mouth of North-East river, three or four miles from the battery. On the same day on which Boyd killed his canvass-backs, near Donahue's battery, Mr. John Holly, another expert duck-shot, belonging to the same place, killed one hundred and nineteen of the same species on Devil's Island; and it is said that several thousand ducks were brought into the town that day, by the different parties engaged in shooting on the flats.

The next night we sailed for the Narrows of Spesutia, where we had some good shooting from the battery and from points. We were here much amused with the deportment of Davis, who seemed to move his eyes as on a pivot, while watching for ducks behind the rushes, keeping his head steadily fixed, all alive as he was, espying, giving notice, and knocking them down as if born to the business. He was also at home in sailing and managing the scow, and for picking out dead ducks from the yawl in a rough sea, his eyes were not to be excelled, except perhaps by those of McC. who, we believe, carried a chart of each duck's drift in his pocket. While harboring in one of the creeks of the Narrows, we heard the distant booming of the swivel guns of the poachers, who "boat" the sleeping flocks by moonlight, which mode of killing ducks, though deservedly executed, has still a spice of adventure in it, and is so far more defensible in our eyes than the old, cold-blooded practice of strangling them in the meshes of gill nets, while diving for food on the shoals.

The whole accursed French system of netting ducks, partridges, and other birds, is well worthy of its inventors, and although we do not

wish to be considered uncharitable, we cannot avoid quoting here two lines of Byron, leaving the reader to parody if he thinks proper. Speaking of Sir Isaac Walton, his lordship, who detested fishing, says :

“The quaint old coxcomb, in his gullet  
Should have a hook, and a small trout to pull it.”

All varieties of the wild duck are less wary, and possess less intelligence than the Canada goose. They also evince much less affection for each other, and we know of no instance of their being domesticated, except in the case of the *anas sponsa*, or beautiful summer duck. Every fowler has noticed the sort of family interest which exists among the members of a flock of wild geese, which frequently leads them to halt, follow the descent, and wait upon the motions of a wounded companion. We believe the same traits have been observed in the American swan. Both are easily domesticated, but it is remarkable that the tamed wild goose and even his descendants, although herding by day with the domestic goose, show a disposition to sleep apart from the flock at night. We first noticed this fact on the farm of Mr. Andrew Lyons, of Cecil, Maryland, and were assured by that gentleman, that his attention had been fre-

quently drawn to the same peculiarity. The goose is in fact the most wary of wild fowl, not excepting the swan, with which they are often seen associated. It is said that the latter bird will sleep and feed without fear, if surrounded by the former, the sentinels of which are ever on the *qui vive*, and are regularly relieved at stated periods. They are killed on our shores over decoys from ambuscades, or by imitating their honkings as the flocks pass overhead. They are also shot in stormy weather from points on the Chesapeake when the wind shuts them in as they fly up and down the bay. Many geese and swans have been killed in this way at Richett's Point, at the mouth of Gunpowder river.

## CANADA GOOSE.

ANAS CANADENSIS.

*Description.*—"The length of this species is three feet; extent, five feet two inches; the bill is black; irides, dark hazel; upper half of the neck, black, marked on the chin and lower part of the head with a large patch of white, its distinguishing character; lower part of the neck before, white; back and wing-coverts, brown, each feather tipped with whitish; rump and tail, black; tail-coverts and vent, white; primaries, black, reaching to the extremities of the tail; sides, pale ashy brown; legs and feet, blackish ash. The male and female are exactly alike in plumage."

"The Canada goose," adds Brewer, "is easily domesticated, and it is probable that most of the specimens killed in Great Britain have escaped from preserves; it is found, however, on the Continent of Europe, and stragglers may occasionally occur. On the beautiful piece of water at Gasford House, the seat of the Earl of



Wemyss, Haddingtonshire, this and many other water birds rear their young freely. I have never seen any artificial piece of water, so beautifully adapted for the domestication and introduction of every kind of water-fowl which will bear the climate of Great Britain. Of very large extent, it is embossed in beautiful shrubbery, perfectly recluse, and, even in the nearly constant observance of a resident family, several exotic species seem to look upon it as their own. The Canada and Egyptian geese both had young when I visited it, and the lovely *anas sponsa* (summer duck) seemed as healthy as in her native waters."

The Potomac, however, is the grand rendezvous of geese and swans, where they are often seen in countless multitudes feeding or sanding on the bars, and are shot from blinds and points. Great numbers of ducks are also slaughtered on this river by swivel guns at night. The paddler lies flat on his breast, and the propelling of the boat in this situation is laborious and distressing work. A duck shooter once informed us, that having been paddled for some distance close to an immense flock of canvass-backs, riding as at anchor with their heads under their wings, at the mouth of a creek, he discharged

his heavy gun in the midst, making tremendous slaughter ; observing that his companion did not rise from his recumbent position at the report, he spoke to and touched him, but he did not answer or stir ; and upon turning him up and looking in his face, he perceived that he was dead. The man, probably, had some organic disease of the heart.

Although the men of the Chesapeake scruple not to aver that we have no wild fowl shooting worthy of the name, on the Delaware, for all that, as we sit in our sanctum, we seem to see, with prophetic eye, a host of grizzled, weather-beaten faces ready to start up, amid a terrible quacking and honking, to tell them a different tale. In fact, it is upon the Delaware, that the greatest skill and fertility of stratagem are brought into play, in paddling to the best advantage upon the watchful mallard, (*anas boschas*)—the wary black duck, (*anas obsura*)—the shy sprig-tail, (*anas acuta*)—the swift butter-ball or buffel-headed duck, (*anas albeola*)—the lively blue-bill or scaup duck, (*anas marilla*)—the restless south-southerly, (*anas glacialis*)—the delicate little teal of either variety, and many others. Until the sportsman has laid his ear, as it were, to the light ripple

at the bow of his skiff, as propelled by the practised hand of the paddler, she goes gliding on to the wary fowl,—and has waited in breathless suspense for the significant touch, which bids him rise and deliver his fire in the midst of the startled rank,—and after boating the dead and wounded, has re-loaded the big gun and again stretched to his oars; or until he has floated down in his whitened skiff among the drifting ice, within raking distance of the flock, or, perhaps, close to the snow-cake where the ducks set huddled in the sun—until he has done this, he has by no means fathomed all the sweet mysteries of fowl shooting, although he may have annually killed countless scores of nobler game, from the floating batteries, or the famous point-preserves of the Chesapeake.

How often has the fowler on the Delaware had occasion to remark, that the single circumstance of the drift of the disguised skiff, being greater than that of the masses of ice among which it floats, has alarmed the wary geese on which he was stealing with the tide, assisted by an almost imperceptible motion of the paddle, and how often, after having unshipped his oars, and laid himself flat on his face in his floating ambuscade, has he been disappointed of a glori-

ous shot, by the untimely presence of a single black-duck among a flock of mallards or teal. Again, on the other hand, how often, after having arranged his reserved guns, and taken a last look at the locks of his long tom, has he been paddled by the cunning hand of a Wilson, a Stinsman, an Everly or a Conner, under the cover of some sinuosity in the shore, into the very midst of a flock of sprig-tails, feeding on the edge of a flat, at the bottom of some unfrequented cove; and rising with mischief in his heart, has poured the contents of the deadly barrels in the thick of the affrighted game, which, as if appalled at the sudden appearance of their enemy, cluster confusedly together as they rise: or early in October, how often has he dropped down the river on some clear, moonlight night, to set his stools, by the first glimmer of dawn, on the upper end of Tinicum or Maiden islands, or upon Martin's or Smith's bars, or some equally favorable spot for the flight of the dusky duck, or the blue-winged teal. Having hidden the skiff on the reedy marsh, and heard the *whir* and *whiz* of passing wings before it was yet sufficiently light to shoot, as day breaks and the stools are more distinctly seen riding on the misty tide, with a

beating heart he beholds a large flock of teal drop as if from the clouds among the rank, and at once raking them where they sit in the thickest cluster, discharges his second barrel with deadly effect as they rise. After this, perhaps, as the sky grows still clearer, looking towards the eastern horizon, he sees just above the rising sun a small black cloud no bigger than his hand; as he looks it becomes apparently larger, when not daring to move hand or foot or even an eyelid, he lies close as death itself; with his finger on the guard, waiting for the instant to fire at the ranks of the dusky duck. If the morning be still and calm they will most probably soar too high for his piece; but, perhaps, the winds blow a half a gale over the troubled expanse of water and the decaying herbage of the shore; in that case they will stool or fly low, and if he shoots at the proper moment, be almost certain to pay toll. A little later in the morning, while sailing up the river towards the New Bar—the ducks having ceased to stool below—the shooter espies some dark object moving on the edge of the marshy shore; examined with a spy-glass, it proves to be a little blue-winged teal apparently playing in circles on the water; the mast is instantly struck;

upon looking again, perhaps, a second bird is seen engaged in the same playful manœuvres; and a few yards further up on the mud, close to the reeds or spatter-docks, the whole flock is discovered sitting in close companionship in the sun. They are probably fast asleep; the outsiders carelessly swimming on the water are the sentries; and to approach the flock without alarming these, is the point. In this case, the shooter either lands at a distance and pushes the skiff before him over the flat, concealing himself as much as possible behind her, and thus silently and laboriously works within shot; or trusting to the skill of the paddler, he lies close in the boat, which is slowly and stealthily propelled in the direction of the game, until, perhaps, a distance not exceeding the point blank range of an ordinary fowling piece is attained, and death descends in a leaden shower on the sleepers, whom the sports of their heedless companions have betrayed. In fact, though shooting from the battery is sufficiently exciting, when the game comes fast to the decoys, it cannot compare in point of adventure and interest with paddle shooting as practised on the Delaware.

We have, indeed, spent many a joyous hour,



blazing away from the ambuscade at the noble ducks of the Chesapeake; or lying in the Susquehanna, with Port Deposit and its heights in sight, listening to the *lip-lap* of the slight surge at our ears—or, perhaps, watching the curious little water-witch,\* as she suddenly emerged among the stools, swimming warily round and round the battery, as if sent out on a reconnoitering excursion from a rank of canvass-backs, which rode the ripples at a distance off Mount Ararat;†—but for all this, we shall never know again the supreme delight with which we bent to our oars among the drifting masses of ice and snow, and listened to the “bald, disjointed chat” of the paddler, on some sunny, mid-winter’s morn; or suspended stroke as his experienced eye caught some dark object on the ice, which the glass revealed to be a flock of sprig-tails basking in the sun; or examined the guns, and laid us down to drift on in silent expectancy only broken by the wary whispers of our companion—the caw of some hungry crow, or the thump of a passing cake on the skiff’s bow; or started up at his signal to deal death and consternation among the affrighted objects of our

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\* Pied-bill Dob-chick—*Podiceps Carolinensis*.

† A height so called near Port Deposit.

aim, and rejoicing in the sport, boated the birds, re-loaded the guns, and again stretched away to the oars to keep the brisk blood in full flow: gentle reader there is a rare pleasure in this, which the thirst for preference, or the absorbing desire of gain never can bestow—a pleasure with which the most successful day's shooting from the battery, can never compare. Much skill and presence of mind are, however, required in box-shooting, and we would advise every sportsman who has never been placed in this peculiar position, to give it a trial for once. He need not be concerned if unprovided with a life-preserver, since in spite of their serious recommendation by a recent writer, we assure him that the danger is less than that which every mortal experiences, in crossing the Delaware in a ferry boat.

To those who have leisure and a desire to engage in paddle-shooting, we say go to Krider's and select one of his splendid double ducking guns; purchase a good skiff with her appurtenances complete; hire an expert paddler, and our word for it, you will find the sport one of the most invigorating and delightful recreations in the world. The agreeable change of element—the pleasurable thrill which almost every one



feels afloat—the healthful exercise in the bracing air—the extent of prospect, and the lurking desire for burning friar Bacon’s astounding compound in something of a little larger calibre than your snipe gun, are amply sufficient to drive off *ennui*, *malaise*, or any other moping malady with a French name, which fashionable flesh is heir to. Besides this, you have the wary game ahead, and that argus-eyed, grizzly-pated mortal astern, with stores and stores of fowling experience under his wild and weather-beaten front, if so you have tact enough to draw him out. It is rather superfluous, to say nothing of savoring a little of self-conceit, for some sporting writers of the day to expatiate at such remarkable length, on the dreadful hardships and direful dangers of duck-shooting.

To listen to such hyperborean arguments as “pelting rains,” “driving snows,” “whistling winds,” and “freezing waters,”—followed up by “wardrobes of water-proof coats,” “legions of stout hearts,” and “life preservers;” one would almost suppose that they were bound on a cruise to Nova Zembla, or the North Pole; whereas all this comical parade of old winter’s icy attributes shrinks into mere verbiage, when compared with the exulting sense of the real thing itself. Give

us, gentlemen, all your experience in shooting ; initiate us a little into the mystery of those fascinating pursuits, which possess such seductive charms for one-third of mankind ; but, for mercy sake, do not frighten us tyros, ye old campaigners, with ominous hints of undivulged but awful exposures—piteous descriptions of over-night double B tricks upon travellers, the mere thoughts of which are enough to make one's blood creep. The truth is, there is no sport, with which we are acquainted, better adapted to set up mind and body, and we know of more lives than one saved by paddle-shooting on the Delaware.

On the flats canvass-backs may be distinguished from other ducks by their incessant diving, and in the air they are known by the wedge-like shape which the flock assumes, and the superior altitude of their flight to and from the feeding grounds. The shooters on the Chesapeake recognize them with the naked eye a great distance. We were assured by a veteran sportsman that, under the cover of the long, thick grass which covers a large portion of the island of Spesutia, he was once enabled to approach, on the leeward shore, within fifty yards of a large flock composed entirely of this noble wild fowl. He described them as wholly

unsuspicious of his proximity on the point, being constantly engaged in diving and re-appearing, while the water around was mud-died and strewn with blades of grass, which they had torn up from the shoal. With the exception of an occasional squabble when one individual endeavored to rob another of its prize, they were very silent; but had there been a number of widgeons or red-heads among them, our informant supposed the harmony of the feast had been more frequently disturbed. Occasionally an old duck raised its body on the water, and seemed to look warily around; then, as another came up beside it, the former took its turn at diving, so that the whole flock was never at one moment beneath the surface. On the inner edge of the rank, between it and the shore, a pair of little buffel-headed ducks were feeding on the floating grass, but seemed careful in their motions not to come in contact with the larger species.

The canvass-back and the red-head breed far to the north. The nest of the former, it is said, has been found in upper California, and upon the banks and marshes of various streams of the Rocky Mountains. They appear in the Chesapeake towards the latter part of October, and

about this period a few stragglers are occasionally met with in the Delaware. We have, ourselves, been paddled within gunshot of single individuals of the former variety, near the old locality mentioned by Wilson, between Red Bank and Gloucester Point. Large numbers are killed by the men of Havre de Grace on their first day's excursion; they are then, however, comparatively thin and tasteless, but soon begin to improve in condition by feeding upon the valisneria, which gives the true epicurean flavor to their flesh. The immense multitudes, which, in Wilson's time, covered acres and acres of the Susquehanna, and produced a noise resembling thunder as they rose in a body, are no longer seen; occasionally they are observed in the distance, darkening a portion of the sky, in a manner which recalls the descriptions of departed days; but there is little doubt that from local causes, the number of the choicest ducks which visit these waters are decreasing year after year. Among these causes may be mentioned the introduction of steam navigation, the relative changes which are taking place on the shores of the river and bay, consequent upon an increase of population and trade, and the annoyances to which the ducks are subjected, from the opera-

tions of the batteries on the feeding grounds. It is not their entire extinction as a species which is to be apprehended at the present day, breeding so prolifically as they do in the desolate and solitary regions of the north; indeed many years may elapse before they are even driven from the flats, on which their favorite food in such profusion abounds; in the growing dislike of the democracy of the land to aught in the shape of restrictive game laws, it is not very probable that the honorable legislators of Maryland can be brought to look so far into futurity, as to provide acts by which wild fowl—especially canvass-backs—may be allowed to take their food in peace; in the meantime, gentlemen will shoot, and professionals strain every nerve to keep the market supplied, while posterity must look out for itself; consequently, every year the firing from point, blind and battery is redoubled, and every year the voice of remonstrance from those citizens, who would fain see something done in the season, to preserve this noble American duck from being driven entirely from the waters of the state, becomes less and less distinct.

Shooting from the points or bars, over which the ducks fly on their way to the flats, is claimed by many as the only sportsmanlike and legiti-



mate mode of killing canvass-backs. For ourselves, the sport is not much to our taste. We had much rather be paddled on the flocks, not with a ton of iron in the bow, but a sizeable gun, such as a man may readily handle and kill his ducks with at sixty or eighty yards. But as this would be equally objectionable with the sunken batteries, of course it would not be tolerated if the latter were once put down. If the ducks are thick on a fly and come well up to the point, no doubt they afford considerable amusement for a short time, and require some little knowledge in the art of shooting, to strike them to the best effect in their rapid and rushing course. The sight of a falling duck thus stopped and precipitated from a vast height, is said to be a fine sight, provided you are cool enough to enjoy it in the thick of the thing, when nothing but loading and firing *a la mode* is the order of the hour.

The singular process of tolling, which was the most successful of all the modes of killing canvass-backs in the time of Wilson, when the ducks were not only much more numerous, but fed closer to the shore, is now comparatively little resorted to, except on Bush and Gunpowder rivers, and only for a few weeks in the early

part of the season. The celebrated naturalist just named, mentions a curious fact connected with the history of this duck, which shows how strong is its partiality for that particular species of grass, on which it comes annually, so many hundreds of leagues to feed.

“In the severe winter of seventeen hundred and seventy-nine and eighty,” he says, “the grass, on the roots of which these birds feed, was almost wholly destroyed in the James river. In the month of January, the wind continued to blow from W. N. W. for twenty-one days, which caused such low tides in the river, that the grass froze to the ice every where, and, a thaw coming on suddenly, the whole was raised by the roots and carried off by a fresh. The next winter a few of these ducks were seen, but they soon went away again; and, for many years after, they continued to be scarce; and, even to the present day, in the opinion of my informant, have never been as plenty as before.”

The canvass-back seldom wanders far along the course of the rivers which empty into the Chesapeake, but the red-head, although delighting also in the head-waters of the bay, is often shot a considerable distance up the Susquehanna.

Freshets, to which the shallow waters of the river are constantly liable, drive the ducks, for the time, into the lower bay, where they feed upon eel-grass, small fish, and scaup. Very severe weather reduces them to great extremities, by freezing the water over the flats, and cutting them off from the celery grass. Advantage is sometimes taken of this by the shooters, who cut large holes in the ice over the shoals, and firing from an ambuscade at the ducks which eagerly congregate around these spots, commit terrible havoc. They dart well to the decoys in a snow-storm, indifferently in a calm, or when the wind and tide are contrary, and always best in the early part of the day, and an hour or two before sunset.

Their flights are much regulated by the state of wind and weather, and it is said that some shooters, by paying close attention to the signs, will go out after sunrise, and, selecting a judicious position for their batteries, often kill more ducks in a few hours, than those who have been astir long before the first glimmer of dawn. This is remarked especially of the Boyds of Havre de Grace, one brother of the two being noted for his judgment in placing the box, and the other for his skill in levelling the ducks.



It is now known that in their southern migrations, canvass-backs, to a certain extent, follow the line of the coast, having been seen in great numbers, according to Dr. Lewis, as far south as Galveston Bay.

About the first of April, sooner or later, according to the nature of the season, the ducks are observed to collect in great flocks, and after sweeping round and round the feeding grounds, to ascend to a vast height, and thence direct their flight due north. Previous to this every individual has visited the shores or bars, and filled its gizzard with sand, in order, as we suppose, to prevent a collapse of this organ during their long journeys through the air. Small squads of canvass-backs have been seen in the vicinity of Spesutia as late as the middle of July. These, of course, were composed of individuals crippled by the shooters and rendered unable to migrate.

## PIGEON-MATCH SHOOTING.

Club pigeon-matches appear to have gone out of date in Philadelphia, though public and private matches are still common. We hear now, however, of the existence of no such clubs as were accustomed, formerly to meet once a week at Heft's and elsewhere. The Philadelphia Sporting Club, which was formed some years ago exclusively of Krider's customers, is defunct, and all attempts to revive it have as yet proved ineffectual. If we ask where are the hearts who once shone on the shooting ground, and at the jovial board, and were the leaders in many a mad prank, a voice, very like that of the venerable foreman of the establishment, answers hollowly as a ghost; "some abroad—some in their graves—some metamorphosed into careful men of business—some, like myself, white with the frosts of years, and 'wrinkled deep in time.'" Nevertheless the old fellow, who has lived to become one of the fixtures of the place, is still hale and hearty, and may yet

survive some of us representatives of the rising generation.

Many of the private matches of the day have emanated from Krider's, and at some of these we have witnessed shooting, which might compare favorably with the exploits at the Old Hats, the Red House or any other ancient place of meeting for the English Sporting Clubs. The late Mr. S——n was a celebrated pigeon shot. Messrs. F. G. and C. J. Wolbert, Jr., Major Flommerfelt, Dr. Sartori, and many others are also very sure. Of the professed shooters, Mr. D. Wills is perhaps the best in the state, either at single or double birds. The spring-trap is now comparatively little used; being considered by practised pigeon shooters to give the bird too little chance of escape. At the public matches, some of the old rules still in force are objectionable, and often give rise to dispute. The charges should always be limited to an ounce and a half of shot, which throws ducking-guns and demi-rakers out of play, and places all barrels of a moderate guage on a par. The judge should also examine the birds to be shot at, before the match begins, and reject all such as are not strong and well fledged. Such as still have the squab-cry should never be allowed to any

shooter, good, bad, or indifferent. We have seen a bird adjudged to a fellow who had over-shot it, entirely because it had been gathered within the bounds, solely from its inability to fly out of them. It would be well if one person should have the handling and gathering of the birds. He should also pull the string of the trap, and should be appointed by the judge on the ground. The latter should always ask the shooter if he is ready, and upon being answered in the affirmative, should, *himself*, give the word to the runner to let the bird fly. The runner should not stir to gather a bird until ordered by the judge. In a doubtful case, the direct distance should be measured by the judge with a graduated line, and in doing this he may be assisted by the person who gathers the birds. No person except the arbiter and the runner, should be allowed to address or stand within ten feet of the shooter, after he has taken his post, and, of course, the shooter should heel the mark and keep the butt of his gun down until the birds rise. If a bird refuses to fly after a trap is sprung, the shooter should wait two minutes by the watch of the judge ; he should then hand his gun to the runner to shoot the bird on the ground, and a second bird should be placed in the trap, as soon as the same marks-

man is prepared to shoot. No bird should be placed in the trap, until it is distinctly ascertained by the arbiter that the shooter is ready to take his stand, and every bird should be placed with its head from the crowd. If the judge has any doubts about a bird gathered within the bounds, he should examine the bird himself, and give his opinion accordingly. The shooters should each charge their guns under the inspection of the judge, as soon as their names have been called by lottery. In gathering a bird, the person appointed may go outside of it, but he should on no account be allowed to strike it with a missile of any kind. If it should alight on a tree within the bounds, he may climb the tree or send up a boy for the purpose, but the bird, to count on the score in favor of the shooter, must be fairly gathered with the hands. If a bird walk from the trap and away from the shooter, within the two minutes assigned, he may advance or not at the discretion of the judge, who should, however, always endeavor to preserve the relative distance of the shooter and the mark. No missiles should be thrown on the bird's refusing to rise, except at the order of the judge. His decision in all cases should be decisive on the ground. The ties should be shot

off, alternately, bird for bird, unless some previous arrangement should exist among the shooters. All dogs and outsiders should be warned without the bounds, before the shooting commences, and if, in the opinion of the judge, a shooter is any way interfered with, he must be allowed another bird. There may be one or two judges appointed by the makers of the match, though it is better in our opinion to have but one. Eighty yards limit and twenty-one yards rise for single birds, with fifteen for double, are the usual distances in this country, though we believe the rules of the old English clubs allowed twenty yards more to the bounds. It appears to us that in private matches with double birds, two traps should be used, placed at least five yards apart. This would lessen the liability of both birds being killed by one barrel, and spring-traps being used in this case, and sprung precisely at the same moment, would give fair double shots to each shooter, and bring his skill more decidedly into play, as the pith of the sport consists in the strength with which the birds fly. The passenger pigeon (*Columba migratoria*) has been frequently shot from traps in this country, and when not disabled by confinement, affords excellent sport. It flies very swiftly, and, in general,



straight from the trap, and cannot be brought down unless covered immediately. They should, however, be used for this purpose as soon as possible after being netted, as they soon beat themselves to pieces in captivity.

The English wire cartridges, which have been used to a considerable extent in pigeon matches abroad, have not obtained much favor in this country. We have never used them either in matches or in duck shooting. Shot cartridges, however, are held in little esteem by the duck shooters of the Chesapeake.

## FIELD DOGS.

### BLENDING OF STOCKS.

We shall confine our remarks concerning the mixed breed, to the pointer and setter, reserving a regular treatise upon the sporting dogs of America for some future occasion. We could heartily wish that a period should be put to the practice of crossing these two varieties, at least for the present. It has so extensively prevailed among us, that comparatively few dogs of pure stock are now to be had, and both products of the cross have degenerated to a certain extent.

For the pointer, we doubt if, as a rule, his professional qualities have been improved by his relationship either with the setter or the foxhound. An uncommonly fine animal does occasionally occur, but the instances are few and far between. The same remark may be made of the setter. Indeed, as far as our experience serves us, for one really good dog of the mixed breed, we have seen, perhaps, twenty, which were entirely worthless, or showed something *outré* and *malapropos* in their conduct in the



field. If the setter gains any thing in steadiness by his relationship to the pointer, he loses in beauty, range and dash; while the pointer's style of quartering his ground is often lost in the cross, degenerating into a loping, desultory gallop, like that of a wolf.

The setter, too, loses much of his symmetry and feathery elegance of form, and the pointer of his clean, thorough-bred air and astute look. Both are less easily subjected to discipline, and less reliable than dogs of pure stock. A propensity to hunt in a line, to rake, and crouch on their game, are also observed in the mixed breed. Besides they are apt to prove wilful and unsteady, especially in company with strange dogs; you will find them behaving tolerably well to-day, and as wild as runaway mules to-morrow.

An acquaintance of ours has now in his possession a smooth dog of the mixed breed, whose eccentricities in the field set all calculations on his day's performance at defiance. A wide ranger, he is seen standing snipe at a great distance, sometimes steadily enough, but more frequently doing mischief, not by actually driving the game up, but by becoming restless and impatient on his point, now advancing a length or

two as the bird moves from him, and now working round it, fidgiting in a very annoying way, until, ten chances to one, just as the shooter is hurrying breathlessly up, the bird springs and the shot is lost. Hunting always as if he were running a steeple-chase, in company with other dogs he often refuses to back, and has been known to dash in and flush rather than play second fiddle. When the spirit of evil has once fairly entered into him, no severity of correction has the slightest effect in restraining the fiend within him, and he will chase, race, yelp, mouth birds, and worry cattle like a very devil incarnate. And yet the very day previous, perhaps, he has been moderately steady. This dog is now five years old, he has been reared in the country, had the advantage of being taken out almost every day, and at the present time is not a whit more to be relied upon.

How advantageously does the purely bred pointer or setter contrast with an individual of caste like the specimen just mentioned, and what a deal of mischief such an animal may create, even among the most staunch and amenable dogs!

As the practice is chiefly countenanced by men who have dogs for sale, we would respect-

fully recommend our readers, as a rule, never to purchase a dog of mixed stock. The difficulty of breaking him, united with his natural wilfulness,—which is never entirely subdued,—is one main reason why so many inferior dogs are forced into the field. We should always remember that the nearer the animal approaches to purity of blood, the nobler are its attributes. The apprehension and instincts of the latter are more clearly defined, and of a higher order than those of the commingled breed; in which the qualities of the thorough-bred pointer and setter seem to be partly obliterated and partly confounded together, so to speak, in a very uncompromising and unsatisfactory degree. But on this head we have said enough for the present, and with a few words on the rearing of the young pointer and setter shall conclude.

Having procured a healthy puppy of either stock as pure as can be obtained, send him by all means to the country until he has attained his majority, if the thing can be done with any degree of convenience. The advantage in this is manifested in the growth and good looks of the animal, and his almost total exemption from disease. A puppy, which is allowed to run in the fields once or twice a day, to empty himself,

cleanse his coat, and bite off the tops of grasses, seldom suffers from distemper, and generally thrives remarkably well on a less allowance of feed than the city bred dog. In fact the latter is often left chained, or otherwise confined to the same spot, exposed to noxious animal exhalations for days and weeks together, on the supposition that as long as he is kept crammed until his stomach protrudes beyond his sides like a pudding-bag, nothing further is required; and when worms, the distemper, mange, convulsions, the ricketts, or some other diabolical complaint has fastened upon him, the owner apostrophizes his fortune, and determines to rear no more young dogs. In this last resolution he is wise, and if willing to pay a fair price—say from seventy-five to a hundred dollars for a well-broken dog, is undoubtedly a gainer in the end, inasmuch as the risk and trouble attending the rearing of a puppy, is well worth the difference in price between the two. When, however, you attempt to bring up a dog in the city, the rules to be observed are few and easily remembered.

The animal should be kept, if possible, in a stable, coach-house, or some substitute for a kennel, where he will not be cramped in his

motions by the chain, or exposed to damp exhalations and cold draughts of air. From the time he is weaned, he should be moderately fed twice a day on bread and milk, broth, or stale bread soaked in gravy, and occasionally with a small portion of flesh, *chopped fine*. If you do not observe this last direction, you will have trouble at the outset, for a morsel that a puppy will greedily bolt, often passes undigested through the lower orifice of the stomach, and lodging in some portion of the intestinal canal, defies all attempts to dislodge it for several days. During this time the dog suffers excruciating pain, and after relief is obtained by administration of active purges and clysters, his constitution remains seriously affected.

Most probably, however, the first untoward symptoms which are noticed are those which indicate the presence of worms in the stomach and intestines, and in these cases we have found common table salt regularly administered in milk, to be the most safe and effectual remedy. It is also beneficial in convulsions arising from distemper, or from tanial affections; a small tea-spoonful introduced into the mouth often having the effect of putting a period to the paroxysm. The distemper shows itself by



various symptoms, the first and most decisive of which are a short, dry cough and a slight discharge from the nose and eyes, conjoined with the decline of appetite, loss of spirits, and indisposition to move about. For an elaborate account of the treatment of this terrible scourge to the canine race, we refer the reader to Youatt and Blaine, or advise him, if convenient, to call on Dr. Evans of Buckley street, Philadelphia.

Cases of common mange are to be treated with preparations of sulphur, and change of diet. The following formulæ, copied from Blaine, are said to be very effectual in the common varieties of mange.

“No. I. *Powdered sulphur*, yellow or black, four ounces. Muriate of ammonia (sal ammoniac, crude), powdered, half an ounce. Aloes powdered, one drachm. Venice turpentine, half an ounce. Lard, or other fatty matter, six ounces. Mix.

“No. II. Sulphate of zinc (white vitriol), one drachm. Tobacco in powder, half an ounce. Sulphur in powder, four ounces. Aloes in powder, two drachms. Soft soap, six ounces.

“No. III. Lime water, four ounces. Decoction of stavesacre, two ounces. Decoction of white hellebore, two ounces. Oxymuriate of

quicksilver (corrosive sublimate), five grains. *Dissolve the corrosive sublimate in the decoctions*, which should be of a moderate strength; when dissolved, add two drachms of powdered aloes, to render the mixture nauseous, and prevent its being licked off by the dog, which ought to be carefully guarded against. The best means for this purpose is a muzzle, having a very fine wire capping or mouth-piece, which will effectually prevent the dog from getting his tongue to the ointment, which would prove his almost certain destruction. When therefore the application contains mercury, tobacco, hellebore, or other active poison, it is recommended not to depend wholly on the bitter of the aloes as a preventive to licking, but to apply an effective muzzle. Instead of muzzling, we have now and then sewed him up altogether in a dress; but even then he must be watched, that he does not gnaw it off; if the dog be much valued, a muzzle of the kind described is therefore the best preventive.

“*For the cure of red mange*, to either of the recipes, I. or II. add an ounce of strong mercurial ointment, and use as already directed; but it will be prudent to carefully watch the dog, that salivation may not come on. Should this,

however, unexpectedly occur, suspend the use of the ointment until the salivation disappears; when the treatment should be resumed and persisted in until all appearances of the affection vanish."

In conclusion, it is well to remember that in order that your dog may thrive, it is advisable that clean water should always be within his reach, and that he should be bedded every evening in a litter of clean straw..





JOHN KRIDER, GUN MAKER,



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**JOHN KRIDER,**  
MANUFACTURER OF  
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